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Sir Randal Howland Roberts (1834-), the translator, is probably a native of Kent. He is the 4th Baronet and succeeded his father in 1864. He was a captain in the army, and served in the Crimean war and Indian mutiny. He also acted as special correspondent of the Daily Telegraph in the Franco-Prussian war. [He is a native of Cork County.]

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THE FELLAH.

THE FELLAH

BY

EDMOND ABOUT

TRANSLATED BY

SIR RANDAL ROBERTS, BART.

A NEW EDITION

London
CHATTO AND WINDUS, PICCADILLY

[1882]

PRINTED BY
KELLY & CO., LONDON & KINGSTON.

PREFACE BY THE TRANSLATOR.

THE versatile genius of the popular French author has never been so well exemplified as in the pages of "Le Fellah." The subject of the story is one so pre-eminently interesting, that I have thought a translation of its pages would prove acceptable to those who take any interest in Egyptian affairs.

I have endeavoured, by as literal a translation as the difficulties and idioms of the French language will permit, to leave the style and the ideas of the author untouched. In this I have had great difficulties to contend against, and I must therefore throw myself upon the generosity of my readers.

The events of the last few months have brought Egypt and its vast resources almost to our doors; and what may have been hitherto looked upon as a distant land, the genius of M. de Lesseps has made

a half-way-house between England and her Indian possessions. That the pen of Edmond About has made us better acquainted with Egyptian affairs, is a fact that anyone who reads the pages of "The Fellah" cannot deny; the more so as it would seem that the author has employed all those powers of description he so eminently possesses upon its pages.

RANDAL H. ROBERTS.

THE FELLAH.

CHAPTER I.

I DO not exactly remember the date, but Egypt was in the possession of an original named Saïd Pacha, and as yet I had neither the hope nor even the curiosity to see it. In short, the adventure that I am about to relate to you by way of a prologue, dates back to some nine or ten winters, and upon that occasion, winter was no empty appellation. The trees bent under the weight of the hoar frost, the ground cracked under our boots, and the barrels of the gun burnt the tips of my fingers, when by chance I took off my glove.

It was about the close of the old year, unless, indeed, the new one had commenced; it was impossible to say if the rent had been paid or was due; but certainly it was a Sunday, for we were shooting at a great manufacturer's, who was busily engaged six days out of the seven.

The keeper had just placed me at the corner of a small coppice, with the injunction, "No smoking, no noise; if a rabbit comes your way, let it go, for there are some deer in the enclosure." With these directions he left me, followed by a group of some fifteen or twenty gentlemen, and a boy holding the dogs by their leashes. The first impulse of a sportsman upon being posted, is to ascertain who has been told off as his neighbour, and to put himself in communication with him. A gesture with the hand, a touch of the hat, sometimes a low whistle, replace with advantage any conversation. "You know where I am, I know where you are; do not let us shoot one another; it would be a mere waste of lead."

Generally speaking, I am fond of youth; but at a distance of forty yards, when guns are charged with double zero, I am somewhat suspicious. My neighbour was a tall lad of twenty years, almost beardless, very sunburnt, awkward enough, and apparently very cold, or he was shivering under a sheepskin pelisse.

Our host had introduced us to one another, in a vague sort of way, at the railway station, with five or six other persons. I was, however, not acquainted with him, and on setting out for our ground, something induced me to keep my eye upon him.

Judge of my astonishment, when I saw him enter the wood, approach a pond, break the ice, lifting it up by the edges, strip off nearly all his clothes, untie the laces of his boots, and in the twinkling of an eye

he stood bare-footed, bare-armed, bare-headed, and commenced the mysteries of his toilet, without omitting a single detail. A "*petit maître*" in a comfortable dressing room, before a warm fire, could scarce have done better; and the thermometer of the château read five degrees below zero.

This extraordinary performance lasted so long, and was so well done, that, from sympathy, I myself began to shiver. I followed with intense interest the movements of the young man, who dressed himself as speedily as possible, but my astonishment was not to end here. Apparently there remained nothing for him to do but to put on his pelisse, and to take up his gun; I saw him, however, carefully place himself with his face to the East, by the aid of a pocket compass placed upon his fur coat that was spread upon the ground, and commence a series of gymnastics, grave, austere and solemn in their performance, that were not without a certain grace.

His arms were lifted to the heavens, spreading them out horizontally, then crossing them upon his breast; at one time standing up, at another upon his knees; sometimes he prostrated himself in order to kiss the ground—and all this was done with the air of a man who was fulfilling his duty before heaven, without caring for the opinion of any one.

His prayer explained his ablutions. It was not the first time that I had seen a Mussulman practising his devotional creed, but who the devil would

have expected to meet the Islam under the oaks of Brunoy ?

All the guns being placed and the enclosure closed, I had exchanged a bow with my other neighbour, the dogs had darted off, the hunt was coming our way, and still this little scoundrel of a Believer kept on praying like a deaf man. Two or three shots were fired on our left, several voices cried out to us, "Deer to you!" but the Mussulman still continued with his performance. When he had quite finished, he took up his pelisse, returned to our ride, picked up his gun, perceived the deer coming down upon us, killed the buck, spared the hind, and changed his cartridge, without uttering a syllable.

The hind had forced her way through the enclosure, the keeper rated the dogs away from the body of their victim, the sportsmen drew together, whilst I approached the young man, and said—

"Accept my compliments, sir, not so much on account of your good shot, but more so upon the circumstances that preceded it."

He smiled coldly, cunningly, like a man who is not certain whether you are laughing at him or not. I explained myself.

"I admire, when a thorough sportsman—and you are one—can finish his prayers without being disturbed, even by the cry of the dogs."

"The Mueddins have taught me that prayer is preferable to sleep— how much more then ought it to be preferable to amusement ?"

"Oh! I quite understood that you were a Mussulman."

"And that no doubt astonishes you; is it not so? You are descended from those who say, 'Can one be a Persian?'"

"We are no longer quite so ignorant as the contemporaries of Montesquieu—we know something about foreign nations; and, see here, without knowing where you came from, I can certify to the fact that yours are no Persian lineaments."

"No, thank God! Persians are heretics."

"Then you are a Turk?"

For one moment he drew back, and then replied, with a voice in which his emotion was ill-disguised—

"The Turk has done much harm in my country; they may, perchance, do much good some day, if God permits. It is a Turk who is the heir of the Kaliphs and the chief of our sacred religion. It is a Turk who rules my country, and who raised me from the dust to elevate me to the height of civilised men. What would you say of me, if I bit the hand that feeds me? But here come the gentlemen to join us —deign to accept my card, it will inform you whence I come and who I am."

At the same time he placed in my hand a square of glazed paper after the latest fashion, and I read—

AHMED-EBN-IBRAHIM,
Fellah,
At the Egyptian Mission.

Chance brought us but once together before the close of the hunt, and again I was prevented from renewing our conversation. He was talking upon business to a Manchester cotton-spinner, and I was only able to remark that he expressed himself with ease in the English language.

We returned to the château by way of the farm. During his spare moments our host cultivated a hundred acres of land, proving that a rich Parisian, industrious, as well as a man of letters, can, in addition, be a cultivator of the ground, although somewhat out of his line. The buildings, very simple, although solid, commodious, and well distributed, enclosed a vast square, where five hundred head of poultry, selected from the best breeds, enamelled the dung-hill.

The agricultural implements, separately numbered, were ranged in good order under a shed. A small steam-engine supplied water, threshed grain, winnowed, cut the chaff and roots, and crushed the apples for cider, all under the eye of a bailiff, dressed with as much care as if he was the manager of a large office. The pig-stye, the sheep-fold, and the stable of the Dutch cows, were all decorated with victorious escutcheons obtained at various shows. Thirty horned beasts, glossy with health, stood in litter up to their knees, chewing the fragrant root of the mangle wurzel, contained in the mangers bearing their respective names, the portion of the building allotted to the calves and heifers

being at the further end. The bailiff called our attention to a young beast of three months, his most promising specimen. "See," said he, "how close she is to the ground, long in the body, thick everywhere, and well rounded. I recommend her to the attention of M. Ahmed, who understands these matters.

He gave his opinion modestly and without pretension, but with the justice and precision of a retired breeder. I concluded he had visited Europe, and that he had no doubt passed Grignon; but an observation he made with regard to the regulator of the machine, made me think that he had probably gone through the Central College. A farm labourer, however, took him aside for the purpose of showing him his sick child, making me think that decidedly he could be no stranger to the science of medicine; and the curiosity with which this young African had suddenly inspired me, haunted me until the dinner hour.

You have, no doubt, already observed that the "reunion" was numerous; I must add that it was equally brilliant. The wife of our host, young, and of prepossessing appearance, had several friends of her own age, fair ornaments to any drawing-room. All these pretty women, without aspiring to the *rôle* of Diana, took a lively interest in ours port, glad to leave Paris in mid-winter, to breathe the frosty air, redden their pretty faces, and above all, to play the truant in the society of their dear husbands.

Occasionally, when the weather permitted, they came, attired in short dresses and high-heeled boots, to breakfast at the cross-roads of Vieux Hêtre; but regularly on our return you found them in low dresses, seated round a blazing fire, fresh and blooming, full of fun and satire.

To these young ladies was allotted, according to the custom of the château, the task of electing the King of the Chase, whom they crowned with roses, or thorns, as suited their fancy. On my entering the drawing-room I found them victimising Ahmed. Seated upon a stool in the midst of their little circle, with a violin in his hands, without a bow, he was singing an Arab song, accompanying himself upon the instrument with his fingers.

At first he seemed to me really to be pitied, and I was about to create a diversion in his favour, when, on looking closer, I perceived that his face was wreathed in smiles. Sounds, like perfumes, have the privilege to waft us far from ourselves, across time and space. Ahmed opened his eyes like a man who once more sees his native land. Perhaps, indeed, the joys of such patriotic recollections were made up of a sort that our senses could ill appreciate, although perceptible to his. His melody, slow and monotonous, spoke absolutely nothing to our souls. Melody, the soul of music, shone but by its absence; nevertheless, he sang not only with spirit, but with conviction. Was it we who were making a mistake, or was it he?—who can answer? A German philoso-

pher, to such a question, would answer that the pleasures of the ear are eminently subjective. Mozart, who to us is a god, appeared as a savage to the Americans, who were unable to appreciate him. Would Phidias and Virgil have been more to their tastes? I doubt it. Prose is for all the world, poetry for almost all the world, but music is only for the few. Prose expresses ideas, poetry sentiments, music feelings, and these feelings are of a character so subtle that every man is unable to accept their sensitiveness. I think music is as inferior to poetry as poetry is superior to prose. It is but the reflection of a shadow; but what a brilliant, delicious, sublime reflection it is to those who have learnt to enjoy it!

Here, then, is a handsome young man—for Ahmed was certainly good-looking, notwithstanding his red trousers and long, stiff-looking frock-coat—here, said I, is a sort of modern Antinous, who has filled himself with our sciences, as a sponge sucks up the water from a basin, and our principles of music are to him as if they did not exist. He is, nevertheless, an "artiste," after his own fashion; he perceives, he feels, certain beauties that escape our observation, he ignores all time and all measure with admirable *sang froid*, whilst the pretty Parisians bite their handkerchiefs to prevent their laughter, and the young men who have come down rush into the billiard-room to laugh at their ease.

"Thank God. *Madame est servie!* I am forced to conclude. Let us go to dinner."

CHAPTER II.

THE soup finished, conversation naturally turned upon the events of the day; without description and a comparison of notes, shooting would lose half its attractiveness. Our host, as modest as he was a good sportsman, brought forward the talents of his guests. "Just fancy, gentlemen," said he, addressing us, "this is only the sixth time that this fellow Ahmed has been out shooting in his life."

A solicitor who had shot for the last twenty years, and who had upon one occasion killed the third of a rabbit, found this statement somewhat paradoxical. "Nevertheless," said he, "I have heard that there is plenty of game in Egypt; but, perhaps, these are only travellers' stories?"

"No," answered Ahmed. "It is true that in game, like in all other things, my country is the richest in the world; when winter, with its discomforts, arrives in your country, everything that has wings to escape with, flies to old Egypt. The Nile swarms with ducks and wild geese, grey pelicans with enormous beaks, pink flamingoes with thin legs, herons, storks, and a thousand other species, the names of which we do not know. The woodcocks, snipes, and curlew, plunge their beaks into the nourishing ooze; quails swarm in the fields, in the sky are clouds of small birds, whilst the bushes on the banks are filled with nests; gazelles bound

across the desert, the jackal, wolf, and lynx, prowl nightly round the villages. Yes, we have plenty of game, but we have scarcely any guns; I never touched one before coming to France."

The solicitor replied, somewhat sharply, "It is very extraordinary that out there, at Monsieur your father's——"

"My father is no monsieur, he is but a hired labourer who works in the fields—he goes out before sunrise and returns not until the shades of night commence, and I calculate that he can thus earn forty centimes per day. Our house, if indeed it still exists, encloses a plot of ground measuring about three yards every way; it boasts neither roof nor windows, a bundle of straw covers it, and a wooden latch closes it. Four years ago the furniture consisted of a mat, two pitchers, and two wooden bowls. I conclude, therefore, gentlemen, you will readily understand that our guns are no more in number than our pianos."

The last few words of his reply evidently tickled him, for he burst out laughing like a child, showing two rows of shining teeth.

Nearly all the guests felt convinced that he was merely joking, and a perfect volley of objections met him on every side.

"The furniture is not complete; you forgot the linen press."

"Pray what is the length of the straw that covers the house?"

"Where is the light admitted?"

"Where does one sleep?"

"How many of you live in there?"

"In a wooden lock are the springs made of shavings?"

"Having left such a place, how could you have come to where we now find you?"

"Why do you say, 'If it still exists?' Are you then without news from your belongings for four years?"

The last question betrayed more of interest than idle curiosity, and proceeded, as one could easily imagine, from a woman's heart.

Ahmed answered categorically:—"A clothes press is unnecessary to those who, summer and winter, day and night, wear for all purposes a blue cotton tunic; the climate of Egypt is so mild that no other costume is necessary. An armful of straw spread out over our heads, permits the light to enter, and protects us against nocturnal dews; for this purpose we employ the straw of the sugar-cane, which attains a length of four yards and more. One sleeps upon mats, and often upon the bare ground. At home we were seven in number—father, mother, and five children; three are dead. This is the usual rule; with us the average of mortality is four children out of ten—in France you save two more; but with your resources, and your knowledge, you ought to do far better. Our wooden locks are things ingenious as well as simple—we have used them from time immemorial; I will show you one some of these

days. The soldiers of Napoleon ought to have described them to their compatriots; they laughed so much at our locks, our living clocks, and the wood we burn."

"What clocks?"

"The Mueddins or Muezzins."

"What wood?"

"Manure dried in the sun. But pardon me—was it not you, madame, who did me the honour to enquire if I was without news from home? It is unfortunately too true. I have written more than twenty times to my parents, and I still wait for an answer. My father can neither read nor write, a common occurrence amongst all the peasants of his age; whilst my good mother, poor thing, were she not ignorant of these things, would be about the only one instance in the country. I relied upon their applying to some neighbour, for instance the schoolmaster of the mosque where I first received the rudiments of instruction; but, perhaps, they have left our village, perhaps from choice, perhaps by order to do so. The 'Fellah' loves not to travel, but they remove him sometimes; how then could a letter reach him?"

"It is true, then, what travellers relate about this frightful despotism? A man may be taken, torn from his family, transported a hundred miles distant from his house, to regions unknown, without either prayers or protestations——"

Ahmed interrupted this tirade with a gesture at

once both serious and melancholy, but which was not without a certain amount of pride.

"The will of his Highness," said he, "is law to his faithful subjects; but you who pity our condition, and mistake our resignation—you tear away your sons at twenty years of age. The State appropriates your children with the pretext of utility to the public. To defend the country, which for the greater portion of the time is not in danger, a young French peasant is seized upon, bedewed with the tears of his mother, and is sent off to the end of the world, to Russia, to America, to Japan——"

"It is the military service, it is not drudgery."

"Certainly, if by drudgery you mean the confiscation of the human person to the profit of works of peace, the obligations that are imposed upon the French peasant are a drudgery less hard to bear than those imposed upon us; but the condition of the two countries is also very different. It is not the Emperor that makes the rain to fall upon your lands; it is the west wind, and the service thus rendered to you is not brought about by manual labour. In Egypt, where the water from heaven falls rarely more than three times a year, it is the prince that makes the rain, by distributing the waters of the Nile amongst the irrigating canals. He can only do it by manual labour; it is therefore necessary, in the general interest, that every arm should be at his service. If he abuses this power, so much the worse for him and for the people. I do

not say that perfection lives in personal power, but I am inclined to respect the authority of those above me. Does it become me to question the use or the abuse that he makes of my talents or my person? I had nothing, I was nothing; at sixteen years of age, I passed the half of my existence in drawing water from a canal, and emptying it into a side canal or trench. One day the Viceroy, whom God preserve, commanded his prefects to pick out twenty-four young people, in order to teach them European agriculture. The Moudir of Minieh, which is our residence, cast his eyes upon the place I lived in; amongst us were a few who could read and write. The poorest were first questioned, but not one of them would leave the country. I must tell you that the little Fellahs are dreadfully frightened at you people, and this is somewhat the fault of those gentlemen who came amongst us with hats. I almost feared that I was coming amongst a nation of ogres; nevertheless, I took heart of grace, and I resigned myself to the cavas of the prefecture, who are, strictly speaking, the gendarmes of the country. My mother had given me an amulet against bad luck, and my father a stick six feet long, as a preventive against the gentlemen in hats. The amulet I wear still, but it is now only as a keepsake."

"Certainly," said I, "your four years have been well employed!"

He shook his head. "No, not too much; I wanted preparation, and, above all, guidance. I ought to

have known French before landing in France, and English before leaving for England. It was necessary in the end to acquire two languages, and two languages that have no possible affinity with my own. I have been made to study so many things that it was most difficult to arrive at the bottom of any. Think for a moment what we are when we arrive amongst you, and endeavour to imagine the absolute doverty of a mind quite new to everything. Here we have good masters, but the government of his Highness provides us no instruction. The agents employ us, sometimes at one calling, sometimes at another, like the wind that blows on the shores of the Nile. I have been placed one after the other at the study of medicine, the law, agriculture, chemistry, mechanics ; and, God forgive me, even at fortification."

"It is a system likely to make a man good at everything."

"Or rather at nothing. These colonies of students, that cost the country of the Nile so dear, scarcely return the profit one ought to expect. It would pay better to send to Europe young people cut out for such a purpose, and whose bent for this or that profession had been already ascertained. It is not by chance that one can pick out the reformers of a country. I see my friends of the Mission : some kill themselves with work ; the others lose courage, and give it up in such a way, that hey will return, having but learnt your language. And again for one,

that becomes a minister, chief engineer, admiral, or *préfet*, I count two or three who will do quite as much upon the wages of an interpreter in the English hotels of Cairo and Alexandria."

"What does it matter if the Mission produces one year with another half-a-dozen such fellows as you? It seems to me that the public offices will be well filled in the end."

"Don't let us mention public employment; my career is already settled. I hope to live and to die a Fellah!"

"At least," cried the mistress of the mansion, "I trust you are about to explain to us the true meaning of the word Fellah. You have mentioned it two or three times in the last quarter of an hour with different meanings. The books that I have read seem to describe the term as synonymous with the miserable, the lazy, and the slovenly; and you inscribe Fellah on your cards, in the same way as we boast of nobleness or office."

At this kind interpolation, certainly uttered in a sweet tone of voice, Ahmed bounded from his seat, his form seemed to expand, and fire flashed from his eyes.

"An office, did you say, madame? If it is an office to but nourish, enlighten, and clothe the human race, the Fellah is a functionary placed as high, at least, as your prefects, and our moudirs, of which England is deprived, and which, happily, she exists without. He, who from morning to night, the whole

year long, works hard to produce the corn, the oil, the sugar, and the cotton, who in France calls himself labourer, or in Arabia Fellah, deserves more notice than the pampered position which birthright accords in the official field. To tell you, however, that this title assimilates to the marquisates of Europe, I must declare myself incompetent. What is nobility? if to Boileau, and to our ex-sultan, Bonaparte, I accord that nobility is no chimera, they in their turn will shower upon me a swarm of contradictions. Almost all the heroes of a bygone age have won their spurs by exploits, which to-day would place them in a court of justice. You pride yourself in having for an ancestor a man whom you would, if he were alive, repudiate in the papers. You parade with pomp the picture of an amiable ancestress, who was the wanton of a king. You would hide yourself in a hole were she your mother, your sister, or your wife. Nobility has been bought with money, paid upon the table, since the end of the seventeenth century. You deck yourself with a title, thus acquired; but you would die of shame if you knew you had paid for the cross of the Holy Sepulchre. You shout upon the roof-tops that personal merit should go before all things; but you value nobility more, because it is more ancient; that is to say, less selfish. Napoleon, the most illustrious of your adventurers, wrapt himself up in genealogy. Whilst he instituted the Legion of Honour, and sanctioned the abolition of the right of primogeni-

ture, he created an hereditary aristocracy, he destroyed, curtailed, and to complete the contradiction, he regilded the escutcheons of the old noblesse. You have had princes, sincere, honest citizens; they knew not how to protect, or to suppress titles; they gave to one, to others it was permitted to take; and you are still in the same position. Usurpation is forbidden to magistrates, tolerated for prefects, and ordered to diplomatists. A manufacturer of lucifer matches is made a grand earl, because he knew how to enrich himself by making millions of matches, but his gentleman of a son could no longer sell a single one without disgrace to himself. To this you will reply that one is no longer disgraced; that the best blood are apprenticed to wine menchants; that odd or even scandalous alliances leave the name intact; that the illegitimate daughter of a count and a washerwoman would inherit all the paternal titles, were she but received by society; that the protecting barriers of aristocracy sink on all sides, and that the magistracy of the king-at-arms is exercised by little forgers in office. More reason then to render homage to the nobleness of the Fellah, who is more ancient, more pure, more benevolent, and the most modest of all. Our fathers are the first men worthy of the name by which they were described in history; they have created on all sides a perfect civilization, when everything else was blank or barbarous in your country. This race, patient, ingenious, and quiet, has invented agriculture, the arts,

writing, and what is worth more, justice; it is their morality that directs you still, each time that you do good. Long, long ago, before the age when events commenced to have dates, the agriculture of our fathers surpassed in perfection all that you admire so much to-day. Certain tombs, of a really immemorial antiquity, show us how rustic life was full and happy amongst the Fellahs, until your fathers, armed with flint hatchets, destroyed them here and there. We brought up domestically more than forty different sorts of animals, which have since returned to a savage life. I said that *we* brought up—for I flatter myself that I am a direct descendant of those humble gentlemen; my portrait is found upon their tombs, upon all their monuments—the type of the family remains immoveable. Our blood must necessarily have been of a very peculiar quality to have remained pure after the mixture occasioned by eight or ten incisions. We have been conquered in turn by the Ethiopians, the Persians, the Macedonians, the Romans, the Arabs, the Circassians or Mamelukes, the Turks, and whom else I know not; but we have remained the same by an especial decree from God Almighty. It is written above that the stranger and the strangeress shall not see their posterity flourish upon Egyptian soil, the children shall only live provided they become like us. From the third generation the foreign blood is dispersed, and there remain but the children of the Fellah; but as there are a quantity of hereditary qualities

transmitted from father to son with the Fellah blood, it is the great number with us who are the *élite* of the population. You would recognise us by our features and our conduct, more easily and with greater certainty than one discerns a gentleman in a Paris mob.

"You have been told that we are lazy, slovenly, and miserable; I am astonished that some traveller has not accused us of drunkenness; we who drink water, and that even with sobriety. Our laziness consists in digging, at the least, ten hours a day, Sunday excepted, beneath the heat of a sun at over a hundred degrees. Our slovenliness compels us to make five toilets from morning to night, before each of our five prayers. I know few peasants, or even people of fashion, who neglect their person to such a point. We all fast, without exception, for one month in the year; perhaps this is gluttony? We practise alms and hospitality to a degree a little ridiculous, I allow, for we are miserable, very miserable, and that is the only epithet that can be applied to us with truth. The Fellah suffers, he works much more than the peasant of Europe, consumes much less, and saves absolutely nothing. This is the evil that I desire to cure by my teaching, by my advice, and, above all, by my example.

"There exists not beneath the sun a more wholesome climate, a river more generous, a land more inexhaustible than ours. Alone amidst all nations we are exempted from that law of restitution which imposes upon the labourers of the entire world an

almost unsolvable problem. When you gather nine or ten sacks of wheat on two poor acres of ground you say to yourself what shall I do to repay to the ground what it has yielded me? If I do not indemnify it one way or another, each harvest impoverishes it like a dividend paid out of the capital. We, peasants of Egypt, spoilt children of nature, we can reap without end upon the same ground; each flood recoups the soil with an equivalent for all the harvests of the year, as if we had taken four times as much. That paternal river, the old Nile, that has created our country, repairs, by its precious mud, all the breaches we have been able to make. He plunders for us the high lands of Africa; he farms for our profit the riches of twenty adjoining countries who scarcely know our name, and whom we conquer each summer without striking a blow. This being the case, the Fellah who labours on the banks of the Nile should enjoy perfect ease; it would appear *à priori* that he is privileged above his equals. How comes it then that he is the worst lodged, the worst clothed, the worst fed, the most destitute of all men? How is it that he alone of all the world, by privilege reversed, has not the time either to read, to think, or almost to breathe? I love with ardour my people and my country; so should every man do, who is really a man. It is for this reason my attention is directed to the progress of Egyptian agriculture, and to the relief of my brother, the patient, the courageous Fellah."

The youngest of the guests exclaimed—"I know where the evil is. All Egypt's misfortunes have their source in Turkish despotism."

Ahmed paused for a moment, and then answered, "Sir, have you read the Bible?"

"Most certainly, all through."

"Well, then, I advise you to read it again, and I recommend to your special attention Chapter 39 and the following ones of the book of Genesis. One reads, perhaps not without interest, the condition of the "Fellahs" some seventeen hundred years before the Christian era, twenty-three centuries before the Hegira of our saintly prophet, and more than three thousand two hundred years before the conquest of the country by the Turks. Moses, who was born amongst us, relates that the king was the proprietor of the country and the nation, body and goods; it was purely from generosity that he ceded to the people even the forty-fifth part of the harvest. The sovereign, who was certainly no Turk, lived as a Turk. The Bible does not speak of harems, but points at them in the plainest manner in the world, when it says that the generals and grand dignitaries of the crown were three of the king's eunuchs. If, then, there were no harems, there would have been no eunuchs."

"Your pardon, Monsieur Ahmed, is it true that Potiphar himself belonged to this interesting, as well as disinterested, class?"

"Eh! most certainly, since the generalissimo was he."

"And the king entrusted his army to one of these unfortunates?"

"Why not? they are brave. The great Narcissus himself, was no exception. Do you imagine orientals would employ cowards as the guardians of their honour?"

"Strange! But under what pretext, then, did this Potiphar marry?"

"Upon this subject the Bible says nothing. I conclude that he obeyed the same impulse that actuated his contemporaries of Cairo and Alexandria; they almost all of them married so soon as they got rich. This they did from a motive of charity; for nothing else but to do a pious action by taking care of some old woman, perhaps a widow burdened with a family."

"More and more original!"

"As far as I am concerned, I find this the perfection of human charity—do not be annoyed! and I love to think that *disinterested* charity is not confined to a sect or an epoch, as you appear inclined to believe. Unfortunates have assisted one another from time immemorial. And from the beginning of time have the powerful abused their power as much as possible, and subjugated the world to their caprices. The author of Genesis is a wise man; he has drawn up wise laws, but he seems to find it natural that the good pleasure of the powerful should be the only law of Egypt. Potiphar imagines himself injured by Joseph; he throws

him into prison, his own prison, without other form of procedure. The king quarrels with two officers of his household, he thrusts them into the prison of the generalissimo. A little time after this Pharaoh changes his mind; the grand baker he hangs and beheads, whilst he reinstates the grand butler in his place. Why such goodness to the one and so much cruelty to the other? One cannot tell; one has no business to know; it is sufficient that the king wills it. Such was the despotism that flourished in Egypt thirty-two centuries before the Turkish conquest. The Turks are accused of neglecting their affairs, and of living a lazy life from day to day. The fact is, that many amongst them are so occupied with the harem, that all else seems indifferent to them. I have often heard my father and our neighbours complain that certain employés of his Highness neither see nor do anything themselves, trusting entirely to a factotum or vekil. There is, so to say, not a man who denies himself the luxury of a vekil, or inferior official. But this bad habit, is it really peculiar to Turks? is it not rather an Egyptian climate that suggests, almost commands it? Joseph's good luck in Egypt is accounted for by his aptitude for the duties of a vekil. He is scarcely a servant to Potiphar. 'He entrusted to his care all the prisoners, nothing was done without his orders, and the governor, having confided all things to his care, took heed for nothing.' (Genesis,

xxxix, 22, 23). This governor, nevertheless, was no Turk; Pharaoh does still more for him. No sooner does he discover that Joseph can interpret dreams (this is a talent still much thought of in Egypt), than he delegates to him most absolute power. 'All the world shall obey you, so soon as you open your mouth: all people shall bend the knee before you.' He places his signet in his hand, which means an authority to sign Royal Acts: the impression of a seal in the present day still occupies the place of a signature. When Joseph is desirous of describing his position to his brethren, he says, 'God has made me as a father to Pharaoh, the head of his house, and a ruler throughout the land of Egypt.' When he invites them to establish themselves in the kingdom he adds, what in a parent is good, but in a minister detestable, 'All the riches of Egypt are yours.' Such, gentlemen, is the government that one finds to have existed in every age of our history. The Turks did not bring it to us; it is rather we who taught it to them. If our affairs are in a better position since the commencement of the present century, all honour is due to the genius of a Turk who was called Mohammed-Ali."

CHAPTER III.

Poor Ahmed's excitement whilst speaking was so intense that he forgot either to eat or drink. The

lady of the house made us a sign, which put a stop to any replies, and he was permitted to make up for lost time, without which permission he would certainly not have dined. I do not know whether he perceived the diversion created in his favour, but he commenced eating like a man who wishes not to be behind-hand.

The sobriety of the Fellahs, about which he had so much boasted to us, seemed to have somewhat degenerated in himself. It is true that appetite finds a natural excuse in a youth of twenty years of age. As far as I could judge, on the evening in question, the young man was neither vulgar nor *recherché* in his tastes; he seized upon the bread like a greedy school-boy, but was certainly sparing of the meat; some vegetables, and three parts of the contents of a salad bowl, completed his repast. He drank nothing but water, and abstained without affectation from a magnificent York ham—to him impure food; but he enjoyed the coffee that in this house was most deliciously made. I could see that five or six companions of his own age, allured by the bait of oriental mysteries, were determined to question him in the smoking-room. The smoking-room, as every one knows, is a refuge where free opinions are expressed. Men, finding themselves alone, enjoy their ease with freedom, as if two or three hours of exquisite and refined company had destroyed all the jovial element amongst them. Ahmed was immediately assailed with more or less absurd questions about harems, amulets, and the usual customs of his country.

He seemed to be neither surprised nor angry about a curiosity that appeared to me somewhat indiscreet. I had for a short time sojourned in the land of the Mussulman, and I had ascertained from my own observation as well as from my own experience, what a disagreeable impression is made upon most Turks by asking questions of a certain kind. The most intimate of friends are obliged to have recourse to a paraphrase when asking that simple question, "How are your mother and sisters?"

Ahmed's answers proved to me that Oriental refinements and delicacy are for the Fellah a dead letter. "Mon Dieu! gentlemen," said he, "I know no better than you concerning the arrangements of aristocratic harems. The peasants of my village live all of them in about the same way as the poor people that I have seen in your country. They marry early, so soon as they are able to support a family; debauchery amongst us is quite unknown. The Koran authorises polygamy among the rich; this is a law, however, that does not affect the labourer of Egypt; he has his wife, and he has his tent. He has as many children as he can, for children are the mainstay of families in a country where manual labour is wanting. The children, naked, or scantily clothed, play together under the sun's rays, and bathe together in the Nile without scruple; that is to say, without bad thoughts. We marry, knowing her well, the girl who pleases us, for even if she is veiled one or two years before marriage, we have

certainly had the time and opportunity to study her features when they are unveiled. The ancient usage of the East, sanctioned, but not invented by our sacred prophet, ordains, that the woman do hide her body and her face ; but this misfortune is also I think a sacred law in the eyes of God. My mother and my sister, who go to the fields every day with my father, have their legs, feet, and arms naked. How would you have them better covered, when you have but a chemise of blue cotton for every sort of garment ? This chemise adapts itself to the body as you have no doubt remarked in the pictures of your painters. One uses a strip of cloth to hide the face, if one thinks of it at the time ; but I have met a hundred times honest village girls at work : they were little veiled or not at all, but I respected them all the same. You yourselves, I will be bound, would have no bad thoughts, if you surprised some pretty peasant girls of my hamlet in their daily occupation. Kneeling upon a verdant mound, where camels, donkeys, and oxen have furnished the material, they knead cakes that one dries against the walls, and afterwards burn as you do wood from our stacks to cook the soup and the bread for the house. When they have finished, their hands are certainly not over clean, but they wash them in the waters of the Nile or the canal."

"Sapristi!" cried a young man ; "such a picture has nothing very tempting in it for a Frenchman who has just left the dinner-table."

Ahmed burst out laughing. "My dear fellow, you wanted me to amuse you with a description of my countrywomen; I present them to you as they are."

"But these posture girls, these dancing girls, these divine creatures, these fantastic beings—aërial, misty, who—which—in fact, the dancing girls?"

"This changes our subject. Although I left my country when I was very young, my path was once crossed by the most illustrious and the most admired of these houris. The poor, dear angel was about to go into exile like Manon Lescaut; a police vessel was taking her to Esnè, in Upper Egypt, and through some special interest, her De Grieux accompanied her. One night, at bedtime, an amiable person, urged on by some Americans, met the prisoner. Her guards, not proof against something to drink, permitted her to dance before my lords; and I, poor little Fellah, under cover of my insignificance, saw the performance. Oh, what a lovely figure! She weighed but two Egyptian cantars which make fifty kilos, without counting her jewels, which certainly weighed six pounds. Upright upon the bridge of the boat, she bent, she twisted, and almost dislocated herself, without moving from her place, making her bangles ring, cracking her bones, and sipping from time to time a glass of brandy and water, which she shared with her adorer. The knight twanged a guitar whilst ogling his lady. He was one-eyed. I am not exactly certain how the

entertainment finished, but I can certainly swear that towards midnight the perspiration, the paint, and the dust, formed so thick a coating upon the face of Manon, that the Americans absolutely stuck twenty-five franc pieces there just as the masons of Paris stick a stone in the mortar."

"Horrible!"

"Enough!"

"Let us return to the kneading of the cakes."

"Of what do you complain?" said Ahmed; "I simply tell what I have seen, and you are witness that the subject was none of my choice. If you wish to talk about something else, I shall be only too delighted."

He made a last cigarette, and we soon returned to the drawing-room.

A young lady was practising some operatic music on the piano; but no sooner did she perceive the entrance of the gentlemen from the smoking-room than the air was changed to a lively waltz; five or six couples at once stood up, and everybody was soon dancing. I saw Ahmed treated like a school-boy, and made to dance against his wish by a fair and laughing woman. Never was so strange a struggle depicted upon human features. His large eyes, more brilliant than usual, expressed at once a thousand contradictory things—pleasure, embarrassment, the fear of ridicule, a certain amount of delight, some compunction, an inherent respect for woman, a sort of superstitious terror against a

charming face and two lovely shoulders, the property of another, and at the bottom—quite at the bottom of his soul—the impetuous, fierce, irresistible boiling of Oriental blood.

His partner was neither a light dancer nor a coquette; she was one of those women of the world who go to a hundred balls during the winter, a little for variety's sake, much from habit, and perhaps for the sake of society as well. The Parisian lady, who has danced from eighteen years of age to beyond thirty, does not trouble herself about impressions, or the physiognomy of her partners; she scarcely looks at their faces; provided always that they can steer amongst a crowd and dance in time, they are quite good enough for what she wants them for. If you were to tell her that her neck, her shoulders, and all the beauties she parades at night are capable of causing mere sensual notions in one's mind, she would not understand what you meant. Is she, then, different from the rest of the world? It is simply fashion that ordains that at seven o'clock in the evening she should no longer conceal what she hides in the morning. Upon what grounds is a man to permit himself to be influenced by a change of dress which the husband and wife, the only interested parties, look upon with indifference?

Thus thought, assuredly, the beautiful Madame T——, she who had taken possession of Ahmed for the waltz; but whilst I was admiring her perfect indifference, she encountered the gaze of the young

Fellah, and stopped, quite confused. She herself told us with that perfect art of analysing character peculiar to women, "That little Egyptian in one glance permitted me to see three things—the East, the desert, and the power of youth."

The last train took us to the junction of Brunoy. It being Sunday, almost all the carriages were full; everyone got in where he could. I lost my companions and found myself alone with Ahmed. I almost fancied he had arranged it thus, for scarcely had we sat down, than he addressed me with graceful ease, "I chattered as much as they liked, I made free with the thoughts of my heart; never mind, I regret nothing, not even the stupid ideas I have given vent to. God is great! but I should like to know what your opinion is, and what you think of me? Is there really in a Fellah the stuff to make a man? Do you think that, in due time, and with due attention, I shall be able to become equal to you? or that the formation of my skull and the colour of my skin, will condemn me to a life-long existence in an inferior position?"

I was about to amuse myself at his expense, when he stopped me. "I have submitted to you," said he, "a question already old, and always decided against us; that which disgusts you in my conversation you can read in many a place. The inferiority of the Fellah is vouched for by many people who are acquainted only with his miseries; they pronounce us unfit for industry, for arts, for literature,

for sciences; good only for work like our companions the ox, the ass, and the buffalo. The dromedary would almost rank before us, for the reason that he, at least, is picturesque."

"Well! what matters the comparisons of a few tourists who endeavour to be facetious? I would refer you to those, my dear friend, who, like me, will be easily convinced when they come to consider seriously the perfection to which your nation could be brought."

"Do not believe it; there is a theory, and one much believed, which, without denying the progress which I have been able to make, and the natural acuteness of a Fellah's mind, condemns us to stop short in the midst of our career of moral improvement, like children who tie themselves."

"But, for the love of heaven! my friend, leave such theories alone, and go forward on your way, paying no attention to opinion. If the soldier were to talk politics with every tavern-keeper on the road, he would never arrive at the halting place. Your road seems to me to be clearly defined; a four years' residence in Europe has initiated you into our ideas, our manners, our arts, and our agricultural and industrial proceedings; when you arrived here, you were merely a young savage; you will take back to Egypt the tastes, the requirements, and the resources of a most cultivated human being. Without denying your own religion, you have decidedly noticed the superiority of ours; or better

still, you have raised yourself to that exalted height of philosophy, from which you can look down with disdain upon badly founded dogmas, arbitrary precepts, ridiculous superstitions, and intolerant fanaticism. You——"

He cut me short as I was about to proceed. "Stop a moment," said he. "No, I am not at all the man you take me for; I despise philosophy, that systematic impiety; and I deplore the blindness of you Christians. The son of the Virgin Mary was but the forerunner of Mahomet, the saïs who runs on foot before his master. What shall be said to the unfortunates who prostrate themselves before the saïs, and turn their back when the master passes by? As much as you execrate the Jews who crucified your prophet, so do we equally despise Christians who ignore ours."

"But we do not execrate the Jews."

"Simply because you have fallen into the utmost state of indifference upon the matter, and because the things of heaven no longer find a response in your heart. I see how you practise the religion of your fathers, and I contend you do not esteem it more than ourselves. Show me those who pray Show me those who fast! Where are those who would be ready to die to-morrow for their faith? Prayer with you is woman's work, like tapestry and sewing; charity is for some a means of ostentation, for others a precaution against the gathering of beggars; proselytising is a hypocritical intrigue, the

dark intricacies of a sect who desire to despoil and oppress all others! There is more religion in the Mussulman's little finger, than in the whole body of a Catholic; and I defy you to contradict me, for at the bottom you are just as much Catholic as I am."

"What an extraordinary youth you are! Just now I admired you for your modesty, and here you are standing like a conqueror upon the head of Europe. Religious or not, we have at least constructed on all sides a civilization superior to yours. You have studied amongst us, you have seen what we are capable of; it is a little hard that you do not admire us a little."

"Yes, I admire Frenchmen and Englishmen, but only in the same ratio that a Mussulman admires Christians."

"There is then an exact rule by which you determine this?"

"Certainly."

"Ah, I should like to know——!"

"Permit me to explain myself by examples. When you see a porter who takes a sack of corn upon his shoulders, and who carries it up to a loft without shrinking, you admire that man, without at the same time thinking yourself inferior to him. You say to yourself, 'He takes up a weight that would break my spinal column, but nevertheless he is only a porter, and I am a gentleman.' I have the mind more cultivated than he, a more delicate

taste, a more noble soul. His strength is admirable, and upon an occasion I shall make use of it; but I remain what I am, that is to say, a superior mortal to him. In like manner when you see a juggler in a circus, who throws a rod up into the air, catches it on the end of his finger, makes it turn round his head, and finishes by balancing it upon his nose, your admiration, natural enough, will not permit that man to appear superior to you. Clever he is, no doubt, but he is only a juggler, and your conscience is quite clear upon the point of superiority, were you even the most awkward of men. Well, it is exactly with the same spirit, and with the same restrictions that the Mussulman admires the Christian. They have the power and the adaptation which is wanting with us; they make steam machines, mechanical instruments, ships, telegraphs, gaslight, pictures, books, microscopes, repeating watches; but they do not know the law of Mahomet, and the most humble believer is far superior to them in all the loftiness of moral perfection. Do you understand?"

"Very well; this point of view is quite original. It follows from this, then, that you could adapt our dress, our edifices, our machines, our arts, our industry, our luxuries, and all that which distinguishes us from barbarians, without for a moment ceasing to declare yourselves superior to us."

"I do not desire that my country should borrow so many things from yours. Our dress is worth all

the stiff and awkward habiliments that come from yours. The old edifices of Cairo are, in certain respects, more grand and comfortable than the palaces of Paris. Your architects will never be able to produce the equal to the mosque of Hassan, or the tomb of the Kaliphs. Our industry, which has fallen beneath the criticising eye of Europe, has furnished many *chefs-d'œuvre* sought after by travellers, and sold for their weight in gold. What would you have us to do with your town luxuries? An old bazaar carpet is far more to my mind than the loud, pretentious Wilton carpets that come from London. Our people are able to weave stuffs of silk or gold, with much more taste and originality than the manufacturers of Lyons. Without possessing the aptitude and the resources that are necessary to large manufacturers, we are in a position to supply ourselves with the common necessaries of life; there are, amongst us, still some good workmen. These would die of hunger, if our rich people kept their houses in the French style, and if foreign merchandise inundated the Egyptian market. We are an agricultural people. We require the utensils, the machines, and the working method which abounds with you, in the same way as you have need of our harvests. The arrangement would be excellent for both of us, if our relations were limited to this; but the importation of your luxuries, or rather of your condemned goods, the avidity of agents who wish to make a fortune in six months, have made

my poor country the repository of European tastes. And he who robs our august master, Saïd Pacha, the most noble and generous of men, is the best off."

"If he buys badly and against all rule, and if he pays without bargaining, who is to blame?"

"You Europeans, who have cast a spell over him! You would act otherwise, I love to think, if you knew that, in the end, it is the Fellah who pays for all this. The Fellah, according to the power of his religion, would never traffic the sweat of his brow, or his blood, for the wants of the prince, but he wearies himself to work for the profit of your merchants, who despise and fleece him. Occasionally, his patience is so sorely tried that it bursts forth, and some European is killed. When the news arrives, you say, 'It is fanaticism that awakes once more;' no, sirs, it is only misery that revenges itself!"

"A brave peroration, my dear Ahmed, but you are too excited for me to believe what you say. Your Egypt is not only the country of gain, but it is also the cradle of legends. You left it very young, and with impressions that will no doubt be softened before you return. Before condemning a whole class of men who are my fellow citizens, I should require more ample information. You yourself told us at dinner just now, that the misery of the 'Fellah' had its origin in history, and now you declare that all the harm is done by some five or six agents. I must have this authenticated."

"And why do you not go and ascertain these things for yourself? Perhaps Egypt is not worth the voyage? Do you know a more important subject—more actual, more living? Are there in the world more conspicuous affairs?"

"Than yours?—certainly not. But here below, you know, we each of us have our own. I promise to go and see you so soon as you become minister of agriculture; that is to say, if the bent of my studies does not take me in the direction of Moscow. But you have interested me exceedingly, and the events of the day will leave in my mind certain questions unanswered. I can tell you that my curiosity is keenly excited."

Upon this I pressed his hand and bid him adieu, for we had arrived at Paris; each one took his bag and went in search of a cab.

A month after, I read in a paper the following intelligence:—

"It is already known that H. H. the Viceroy of Egypt, from reasons of economy, has been forced to suppress the civil and military mission that he kept up in Paris.

"The African students whom one had so often seen in the courts of the Sorbonne and the college of France, have taken their passage on board the Nile under very melancholy circumstances. They leave at Marseilles one of their companions, either dead or dying. It appears that the young man entered by accident into the Café Bodual, where he heard an

offensive epithet applied to Saïd Pacha. He protested immediately against this, which left no other course open for satisfaction than an appeal to arms. They fought the same day at the Aygalades. The weapon chosen by Monsieur X——was the pistol. The adversaries were placed at thirty paces' distance; Captain Z——of our garrison gave the signal. The reports were simultaneous, and the young Egyptian fell. The ball entered just below the right breast, and passing out, shattered the left shoulder-blade. His life is despaired of. His name, if our information is correct, is Ahmed-ebn-Ibrahim."

This news caused me some emotion, I confess. Poor Ahmed! I did not doubt for a moment but that he was dead; and I had met few young men who were more worthy to live. But, at the same time, why should he have made himself the knight-errant to defend so questionable a reputation? Fetichism is a bad inhabitant of an out-spoken mind. A nature so brave, so rich, and so original, to end so foolishly! To sum up all, he died bravely; but, nevertheless, what good could such a man not have done, had he but lived for his country! I endeavoured to pay him in some measure a modest tribute by remarking the many excellent things, and even the absurdities, that he had said before us. After all, I enshrined Ahmed-ebn-Ibrahim in a little corner of my memory, where already repose five or six young friends, also defunct, who, like him, deserved better than to die.

CHAPTER IV.

A CONSIDERABLE time had elapsed; I had spent seven or eight years, for good or for bad, I know not which, in occupations of all sorts and kinds, when the spring of 1867 came, and with it the Universal Exhibition of all Nations. Notwithstanding the fact that men of the present day are more apt to forget than to learn, it is impossible to remain oblivious to those enormous specimens of ancient and modern Egypt that towered in gigantic proportions raised as if by magic in a corner of the Champs de Mars. The new Viceroy became an almost independent sovereign under the title of Khedive, and seemed to be in advance of all Europe with his productions of art and commerce. A museum in a sort of temple was filled with relics of antiquity; a pavilion, richly decorated in the Arabian style, represented the middle ages; a group of merchants and artisans described with life-like truth the manners of the present day; the arms of the Sultan, the spoils of enormous animals, perfumes, poisons, medicinal plants, seemed to transport one at once to the tropics; pottery from Siout, and Assouan, filagree work, woven work of silk and gold, invited us to touch the produce of a foreign civilization. Each race, subjects of the Viceroy, were represented by carefully chosen specimens. One elbowed the "Fellah," gazed upon the Bedouin of the Lybian

deserts, on their beautiful white dromedaries. This magnificent display spoke to the mind as well as to the eye; it at once expressed a political motive. As, by degrees, Egypt becomes emancipated from the Porte, she approaches us; she enters, little by little, into a good understanding with the Western powers; she aspires to see herself ranked amongst European nations. A few sacks of raw cotton and corn, modestly exhibited in a corner, recall to our minds the services that from time to time that privileged country has rendered us.

A friend of mine organised this vast exhibition, in connection with all the best men that Europe and Egypt could produce. I used to go and see him often, almost every day, and I felt myself gradually getting interested in Egyptian affairs. I have lost many hours in fancying myself travelling in a large cart, a model of which represented too truly the land of the Pharaohs. I thought often of poor Ahmed, and of the invitation he had given me only a month previous to his death. Why had I permitted the age of long voyages and adventures to pass away without visiting a people the most interesting in all Africa? One lives from day to day; one thinks that there will be time for everything; one abuses the length of life; and one morning you wake up to find that you are no longer young enough to go far away, nor sufficiently free to leave your home without heart-burnings, although the desire to see and to learn has returned to torment you.

But Egypt—is it then so far away, and is one obliged to impose a sort of exile upon one's self in order to gratify your desire to see it? The express train takes you to Marseilles in six hours; the Messageries steamers are only six days between Marseilles and Alexandria; from Alexandria to Cairo is about the same distance as from Paris to Rouen, and Egyptian railways are said to be as good as our own. Taking all these things into consideration, there are but six days between the capital of Louis XIV. and that of Saladin. The apparent facility of the voyage so tempted my desire, that upon the 29th of December, 1867, I arrived with two friends at the port of La Joliette, and we embarked upon the "Peluse," a splendid vessel, well-built, well-commanded, and very fast. The donkey-drivers of Cairo knew her reputation. "Good donkeys, my lord," they say; "fast as the 'Peluse!'"

The sky was blue, without a cloud; the sea appeared calm, and a slight breeze from the north-west seemed to blow on purpose for us. As soon as I had stowed my baggage in a cabin with four berths, which had been kindly ceded for my sole accommodation, I forgot, for a moment, all that I had left behind me, and gave myself up to the charm of thinking of the unknown scenes I was about to visit. It was not the Egypt of Osiris and Isis, the country of enormous monuments and mysterious hieroglyphics, that kept my curiosity awake, so much has been written upon these

subjects. It was not even picturesque Egypt, that Gérôme, Birchère and Beltz seem to make us almost touch in the midst of Paris. I was charged with an apparently ungrateful mission, but admirably adapted to my dearest tastes: viz., to study the resources of the soil and its capabilities for producing more. A caprice of destiny sent me off to Ahmed's country, to ascertain by theory what the poor fellow, too soon dead, dreamed of showing practically. A kind of superstition made me think that I was a sort of executor to his will, that I had his endeavour to accomplish to the best of my abilities, and that endeavour seemed to me to be the most sublime in the world; to serve Europe by opening a corner of Africa, to work at progress in a country whose history is but a long decay, lessen the sufferings of the "Fellahs," still more to excite the productive capabilities of a soil rich above all, and yet miserable, and to work in partnership with the most illustrious, the most benevolent of rivers, the old Nile!

You scarcely quit this new port belonging to Marseilles, that seems like a new year's box full of steam toys, than the magic of the scenery at once rivets you to the spot. That naked coast, those barren islands, a sinister picture of English or Norwegian scenery, formed a pleasant harmony with the southern sky and sea. You could imagine nothing more lovely than the aspect of those grey rocks whose sharp profiles were cut upon a clear blue sky.

Favoured country, delicious climate, it is no longer France, Greece, or Italy, it is the Mediterranean.

Whilst I was admiring the setting sun, as if I had never seen it in my life before, a deck passenger stretched upon his luggage, abruptly addressed me,—

"Is it not grandly beautiful, sir?"

"Yes, it is beautiful."

"Well! I maintain that all this is not so beautiful as an idea."

I looked at him with attention, he did not seem to have a stupid face.

"You have then an idea, my friend?"

"Yes, sir, I am going to Cairo to carry it out."

"Is one permitted to know it?"

"Those poor devils over there have no Music Halls!"

Animal, be off! I turned my back upon him, and I heard him muttering, under his beard, "This person, it seems, is not in favour of progress."

The dinner-bell brought together the saloon passengers for the first time, and our acquaintance with one another began, either for good or for bad. Our president, by right of office, was the commander of the vessel, and I have rarely met any man so discreet, so reserved, and so absorbed in his command, which is no slight responsibility. Night and morning he was to be seen upon the bridge, as also at meal times. One day, by great good luck, I was permitted to join and enter into conversation with

him in his little cabin upon the deck. And I wonder to this day at the quantity of sound ideas, original and forcible, that this gallant man seemed to keep to himself. I imagine that those voluntary exiles from the imperial navy have, almost all of them, home-sickness at the bottom of their hearts. The resolution they have taken in passing from official to civil employment, is at once the most sensible in the world. It is a fine position, no doubt, at thirty years of age, to command a steamer that goes through the water at the rate of twelve or thirteen knots; the new career is doubtless more prudent, more steady, more in accordance with the ideas of the father of a family; but there is something wanting. What, then? Ah, the future! glory! promotion! If *L'Annuaire* excited a quiet enjoyment amongst men by birth and education of the middle class, the story of that little book, where we read that the sight of an epaulet can make a young retired officer miserable, then "To the devil with commerce, say I! I would be the captain of a frigate on the spot."

To the right of the captain sat M. Voisin; in Egypt he is known as Voisin Bey, superintendent-general of the works upon the Isthmus of Suez. The first word he spoke was a kind invitation, the result of which you will presently see. Next to him were two English ladies—without Englishmen; the one of a certain age, perceptibly an old maid, the other as beautiful, as fair, as ethereal as an English-

woman of twenty years of age knows how to be to the perdition of hearts, when she chooses to give herself the trouble. Upon the passenger list her name appeared as Miss Thornton, and her companion called her Grace. Invoke all your recollections of tender souvenirs; gather together in one subject all the graces and perfections that artists have portioned out to eleven thousand virgins; noble carriage, a figure pliant and rounded, a smiling mouth, shining teeth, eyes the colour of the heavens, small feet, tiny hands, a profusion of chestnut hair upon a forehead of angelic sweetness, an air of childlike gentleness and goodness, a certain firmness about the chin that betrayed, nevertheless, the vigour of her character, and all this founded upon a base so agreeable that the heart was at once smitten. When you have combined all this, and made the best of it, I must warn you that your imagination, powerful as it may be, will fall far short of the reality. Grace was as superior to other women, as woman, generally speaking, is superior to man; one could measure the distance between her and her sex as easily as between her sex and ours, which placed two differences well calculated between Miss Thornton and her future husband; and I almost forgot to observe a merit much appreciated on board the "Peluse": she was a religious person, and spoke French correctly.

We were not long left in the dark as to the object and end of her journey. An orphan, without for-

tune, she had been received into the family of a rich merchant, Mr. Longman, of the firm of Longman and Sons, of Windcastle, a member of the Yacht Club, who was cruising with his young wife in the Mediterranean; and Miss Helena Longman, after having enjoyed the Christmas festivities in company with the old people, was going to rejoin her brother on board the "Butterfly" in the port of Alexandria, in order to travel over the East. She had taken her young friend, Grace Thornton, with her, much in the same way that one takes a child to the theatre.

We naturally asked ourselves if Grace would ever accomplish this long voyage, and if men would permit her to return to her native country? There were a good many chances that a little being, so rare and so beautiful, should be stopped midway by some honest man in the shape of a husband. This probability was made the subject of divers discreet allusions, which, however, did not seem to disturb Miss Longman. The old maid was neither foolish nor prudish; she gave us to understand, and that very clearly, that marriage was the object of youth, and the commencement of real life; she would esteem herself very fortunate if she made a good match for her young friend. Grace appeared to endorse these opinions, and beneath the shower of compliments with which she was overwhelmed, she studied, without trouble and without coquetry, the few bachelors who composed her court.

We were scarcely more than fifty passengers of all

classes, and amongst us there were scarcely any tourists. It is not just before New Year's day that a traveller leaves his family and country for change of air. Amongst our companions of the first and second class, there were many officials in the service of Egypt or France settled in the East for business. You knew them by their red Fez caps, which at first seem useless, and even ridiculous; and when one has worn them so long it becomes impossible to do without them. Five or six Algerian Arabs were encamped on the forecastle; they were going on a pilgrimage to Mecca, and five times a-day they prayed, kissing the deck in the midst of the sailors who were sweeping it.

On the evening of our embarkation, after dinner, I risked a cigarette upon the forecastle; here I found a group of French and Italians surrounding the windlass. These gentlemen, for the most part, seemed to be well-acquainted with the town of Alexandria, and although they made the mistake of speaking all at once, my curiosity seemed to have an opportunity of being satisfied.

"For my part," said one, "I want to know why the Jews have left Egypt to seek elsewhere another land of promise. Alexandria is, without doubt, the land of plenty; I am really only at home when I am there. The business that I did during the cotton crisis is quite inconceivable: one only required to be there to gain hundreds and thousands. Not a farthing of duty to pay; pay the duty, it becomes good

for the 'Fellahs.' Rent even is only a legal fiction. I took a house from an Arab proprietor at a rent of 100 talaris. The first time he came to ask for his rent, I addressed him thus, 'You annoy me, blackamoor; be off with you to the consuls, and see if I am there.' He went there, the wretched creature; he commenced an action, for which it was necessary he should pay his costs in advance. This lasted for six months or a year, I forget which, but a day before that upon which I anticipated being condemned in costs, I passed my rights over to a Belgian who gave me 100 louis for my lease, and the suit was null, the jurisdiction being changed; it was before the Belgian consul that the suit and expenses must now be brought. Consuls, that are placed there for the protection of their countrymen, cannot condemn them without certain forms; one has always time enough to make a dive, and the Belgian before mentioned, sublet the place to a Greek, who gave it up to an Italian, who once more made it over to a German. For as we have seventeen consuls in the town, you may easily imagine the Arab was fleeced, and a good job too!"

"It was well done! these animals are only fit to give us their money. Would you imagine that one morning their sort of a police wanted to make me sweep my pavement?"

"You could not have made arrangements to give this up?"

"Ah! but I did. Every stranger is at home in

Egypt, and we let them know it too, morbleu! when they drive us to it. I established, with the assistance of a few young ladies, a boarding-house capable of accommodating thirty-two persons. We collected a circle of the first order, two Greek counts, three Wallachian princes, and a distinguished German, who had fired at the King of Prussia in the Lichtenthal Avenue. No sooner do I do this, than the viceroy's convict guard commence annoying me, under the pretext that two or three religious persons had had recourse to Saint Revolver."

"Religion was outraged! Your consul——"

"Be easy, my consul did his duty."

"And what indemnity?"

"Don't speak to me about it; by accident, or more properly speaking, from thoughtlessness, I forgot to ask 100,000 crowns; they should have given me 10,000."

"I," said another, "I had them, those 10,000 crowns; I had solicited and obtained permission to put up a row of cabins for bathers upon a place somewhat too open to the wind; a squall came and destroyed everything. I commenced an action against the Egyptian government, that had induced me to spend so much money without warning me of the danger. The consul supported me, it was his duty; and I put 30,000 francs into my pouch."

"I knew a man," said another, "who got 4,000 pounds sterling for proposing an affair that government would have nothing to say to."

"They owed him nothing."

"What do you mean? He puts himself to inconvenience, he leaves his family, his position—a very high position; he eats the cookery of the Hôtel d'Orient for three weeks, and that is not worth 4,000 pounds sterling!"

"If he occupied a *high* position, there is nothing to be said. I know, on the other hand, a poor boot-maker, who is owed thirty-two francs for goods supplied, and his consul refuses to see him paid."

"Parbleu! when a consul has got to reclaim millions, how on earth is he to put himself out about a pair of boots? in addition to which the government has paid no one for the last six months."

"Yes, they have!"

"No, they haven't!"

"You don't know what you are talking about."

"Nor you either."

"The coffers of the state overflow."

"They are empty. Constantinople has taken all. I am acquainted with the servant of a certain functionary's wife, who sent a million in gold to Fuad Pacha's address."

"And I can name the mistress of a Jew whom the Minister of Finance asked for 20,000 francs against a note for 600,000."

"And are they there?"

"Certainly; the diamonds of the harem are sold."

"What on earth are you saying? they have just

given an order for 10,000 Georgian women! When one wants money, one finds it. The mayors of the villages are rich, and a few blows with sticks on the soles of their feet——"

"The bastinado is abolished."

"Come, come! since when?"

"Since Saïd Pacha——"

"That robber?"

"That great heart! If you speak of a robber, you mean Abbas."

"What a monster!"

"What a judge! a 'Fellah' woman came to complain to him of a soldier that had taken a half-pennyworth of curdled milk. Abbas questioned the soldier; he lied. 'Open his stomach,' he ordered. It was done upon the spot; the curdled milk was found there."

"And if perchance it had not been found?"

"Abbas would have seized the woman."

"Would he have recovered the soldier?"

"Unfortunately, dear friends, the story is a pure invention."

"How do you know?"

"It was I who invented it."

"I believe it, since you say so. It is, nevertheless, true that when Abbas was but sixteen years old, he poisoned a defterdar with sweetmeats."

"What defterdar?"

"That one who shod his grooms when they shod his horses badly."

"Legend upon legend!"

"So is it also a legend, the story that the inspector of sugar bakeries had all the teeth of the little 'Fellahs' drawn, in case they might bite the sugar."

"It is a tale widely circulated, but half-a-hundred are invented every day upon '*The Consul's Place;*' one must pass the time, and all the viceroys have had their turn since the days of the great Mahomed Ali."

"Great who?"

"Mahomed Ali, I suppose."

"That stupid, that gendarme, who could not write at forty-two years of age!"

"I admire him, simply for learning his letters at that advanced age."

As soon as they had quarrelled sufficiently upon the contemporary history of which they knew not a word, they occupied themselves with the objects that Europeans had in domiciling themselves in Egypt. The consuls-general, the national deputies, even the simple merchants, were exalted or depreciated in turn with inconceivable ardour. The same man was for one a genius, and for the other simply a brute; a St. Vincent de Paul here, a Cartouchy there.

"He has robbed!"

"It is he that has been robbed!"

"Where has he got his millions from?"

"Do you not know that his affairs are in a bad way?"

And all this was confirmed, contradicted, and sworn to with an air of conviction that would have put a justice of the peace to the rout. One of these charming talkers amused us for nearly a quarter of an hour at the expense of the Isthmus of Suez. He had a provincial accent, and weighed well each word.

"The Isthmus," said he. "What Isthmus? The shop of Mons. Lesseps? Humbug! It isn't an Isthmus; it's a trap to catch capitalists in; but we of Alexandria, you don't shave us as you like. Not one single piastre will come out of our pockets before we have seen the three masts pass with a fair wind between Suez and Port Saïd. Out there there are fifty or sixty people who breakfast in the morning, dine in the evening, go to bed at night, and drink champagne to the health of the good people of Europe. When they have not a penny left, Mons. Lesseps will take a great pickaxe of gold, he will pretend to inaugurate something, and crack!—a hundred millions will fall for them from the sky. But we shall never have an account of the millions that they have eaten without doing anything."

I ventured timidly to remark that more than one traveller had seen the works.

"Seen?" cried he, with a fury almost ridiculous. "Seen? . . . . . But as soon as you arrive they make you drunk, and all that you see is when you are drunk. They take you about in a boat in a sort of trench, into which they have already upset three mouthfuls of water, that they have brought expressly

from Cairo, and which serve as a system of illusion, for the whole of the trip, that would make even a fool of the devil. It is the same water that takes you there that brings you back, and to hide the mechanism, there are placed at different distances hollow iron-pipes, surmounted with green palms. Any man, a little innocent, or slightly elevated, would swear that they saw forests of palm-trees. They even hang dates upon them! Do you want to be shown workmen, encampments, or villages, you have only to speak, and everything is ready. At each halting-place you encounter a brigade of workmen, shovel in hand, half-a-hundred tents, and even half-a-dozen houses that are taken to pieces at pleasure. All this follows you the whole length of the road, sir. You land, you admire; you enter a very clean house, you drink a bottle, and break a crust; but no sooner have you turned your back, than the village and the wood-yard disappears by a side path, and are sent to await you at the next station. This is all. Every Frenchman permits himself to be taken there, even the Prince Napoleon, who, amongst the senators, has a character for being somewhat smart. A national idea! a national speculation! and above all national wine! Sir Henry Bulwer, an Englishman (I hate Englishmen, but I respect them when by accident they possess common sense), provided himself with a knife! He made a notch in the wooden house where Mons. Lesseps invited him to the first breakfast, and for the whole length of the

Isthmus, wherever he halted, he found his notch. These milords stand wine, it is well known, like a Marseillaise. And at the last banquet, when he was about to bid good-night to the company, Mons. Lesseps and his friends anticipated some sort of compliment. Not such a fool! 'Gentlemen,' said he, 'I have the honour to observe to you that if diplomatists possess a tongue, it is simply for the purpose of saying nothing.' They might as well have tickled him to make him laugh; that was all the thanks they could get from him."

A murmur of sympathy supported this tirade, and several shopkeepers of Alexandria outdid even this orator.

"What extraordinary trash," thought I! and are we to be judged in the East by such specimens! I remember one day at Scutari, as I was walking on the Asiatic shore of the Bosphorus, my attention was attracted by a long line of things, lifeless, broken, decomposed, and half destroyed, that the stream brought, retook, and at length abandoned. This mass without form, without colour, and without name, did it not bear resemblance to the emigration of human rubbish that an invisible current propelled to the east of the Mediterranean?

I have known since then, that several nations of Europe are represented on the Place of Alexandria by houses as considerable as they are respected. Greece is the first in rank, after that, Italy; then we; but in a colony so terribly mixed, intrigue,

calumny, and boasting have, like a separate tongue, so flourished, that the traveller has a difficulty in getting at what is true. As soon as he knocks at one door or another, he becomes either a croaker or a sceptic. Not a fact, nor a man upon whom opinion agrees. Unanimity is not to be found; a certainty is impossible; and as all sentiments, right or wrong, become dangerously excessive in this hotbed of ardent passions, the scandalous contradictions of all testimonies published upon Egypt are easily explained.

That evening, even in that mixed group, into which I had thrust myself, I obtained without premeditation, an instructive experience. *Apropos* of the unfortunate Algerians who slept upon the bridge, I enquired if the Rhamadan did not soon commence, for I had always understood that the Lent of the believers was a prelude to the pilgrimage. Five or six voices were raised at the same time to answer me.

"The Rhamadan is finished long ago!"

"It is not commenced yet!"

"Oh! I was still at Alexandria!"

"I tell you that it begins in March!"

"In July!"

"In October!"

In the heat of the discussion a man of advanced age, who was smoking by himself, paused near us, and pointing with his finger to a thin crescent that stood in the sky, said to us:—

"This will settle the question, that is the moon of the Rhamadan that is rising."

Having said this, he resumed his walk, but the citizens of Alexandria were by no means convinced. One of them said—

"Why should that be the moon of the Rhamadan more than any other? Its name is not written upon its face."

Another added—

"I know him, that man in the red cap; he is a photographer of Toulon, who has been unfortunate in his business."

"You mistake—that is a dentist of Aix, who buys women for Saïd."

"Come, come! I knew him when he filled the pipe of Abbas Pacha."

Enquiries having been made, the man of the moon turned out to be Mons. Gastinel, manager of the Garden of Acclimatisation at Cairo, professor of chemistry, and one of the most modest and best of wise men I ever knew. The Viceroy promoted him to the rank of bey last summer.

CHAPTER V.

After passing an excellent night, the cabin passengers re-assembled upon the poop at eight o'clock, the sea was calm as we entered the mouth of Bonifacio. A group had gathered round Miss Grace

and her friend; the young girl was as fresh as a morning rose, her cheeks, fanned by the breeze, were tinged with the ruddy hue of youth and vigour, whilst her eyes sparkled. The sea must indeed be the natural element of English people; here was a child, who, for the first time in her life, encounters a sea journey, and does so without inconvenience or fear. At the moment that I joined her little court, I found the subject of conversation to be the wreck of the "Semillante," that unfortunate frigate, whose tomb was at that moment beneath our feet; such souvenirs as these make even brave men ponder. An officer of Marine Infantry declared that the life-buoy hung at his bedside prevented him from sleeping. "For my part," said Miss Grace, "it seems to me I could always get out of such a difficulty by swimming; you say that the 'Semillante' had lost her rudder, and that in addition, she was a little too old and crazy to buffet against the strength of the waves; but there were passengers on board her who were young and vigorous; why did they not struggle, and use their strong arms to gain the shore; you might throw me into the sea, such a trifle would not drown me."

The conversation, from a natural propensity, fell upon the "Atlas," that mysterious steamer from whom we have no tidings. The second in command of the "Peluse," a jolly Marseillaise, round as an apple, explained the fearful tragedy. "The 'Atlas,' like ourselves, had left at the end of December;

the hold was full of book-boards, of bon-bons, and of other delicate articles that form a large bulk, but weigh very little; whilst they had filled up the deck with iron rails. Vessels freighted in this way have an unsteady equilibrium, and the shock of a heavy sea will easily capsize them."

"I quite understand," said Miss Grace; "but how it was that nobody was able to gain the shore by swimming is what passes my comprehension." We tried to explain to her that storms in the midst of the ocean spared no one. "Let us see, mademoiselle, how long could you swim without feeling fatigued?"

"But, sir, I am unable to answer you, for fatigue is a thing as unknown to me as fear."

She uttered these enormities quite quietly, in an easy tone of voice, and without the least appearance of self-importance. What a charming nature this child possessed! When we were shown the Island of Caprera, and the Madeline on the port-side, I almost feared for an instant that Miss Grace wished to reach the islands by swimming. What enthusiasm! she blows kisses to a little white house that was pointed out as the retreat of Garibaldi. "He is almost in France," cried she. "Fortunate Frenchman! Do you thank God that he has placed such a man so near to you?"

"It appears that you have a republican heart, mademoiselle?"

"Oh, no! I am a loyal Englishwoman, and I would give my life for the Queen; but I admire

Garibaldi, because he is at once the greatest, the simplest, and the best of men."

It gave me great pleasure to look at her, and still more so to hear her; nevertheless, the breeze freshened, the sky became covered with clouds, the "Peluse" commenced to dance, and, *ma foi*, I thought it best to regain my cabin. Here I remained quietly until we arrived at Messina, without other amusement than the visits of my friends and the doctor. The doctor of the ship, M. Énault, endeavoured to shame me out of my indisposition. "Are you not ashamed to remain there," said he, "when two Englishwomen are walking the deck and laughing? Miss Grace has breakfasted with a charming appetite, and you, a strong man, you suck quarters of oranges!"

At length the protection afforded us by Scylla and Charybdis permitted those of us who were unwell to dine before Messina; it was the 31st of December, at sunset.

The repast was a merry one; we all thought that the fine weather had returned. The coast of Sicily smiles before us; everywhere are parks, orchards, villas, and picturesque cabins that one sees in one's dreams. It was Italy, more mountainous, and a little less cultivated, showing here and there a village perched upon a rock, like an eagle's nest. The sails flap backwards and forwards. The gas is lighted, here, upon quays of Messina, there, in the streets of Reggio. Whilst they are lifting the anchor

I tried a bout at walking on the deck, and I once more fell amongst the little citizens of Alexandria. Once more a quarrel, and a quarrel of several languages, where French, Greek, and Italian were jumbled together in the most disagreeable way in the world.

"I tell you he is pacha; Ahmed Pacha!"

"No; Ahmed Bey!"

"No; Ahmed Effendi."

"Well! no, he is not even Effendi, but I concede to you that he is Hadji."

"Hadji! him! What nonsense! he is an Armenian!"

"He is a Greek Catholic; and the proof of it is, that he gave 100,000 piastres to our hospital at the time of the cholera."

"What is money to him? Cotton put six millions in his pocket in three years."

"It was wheat!"

"It was meat! he never lost a cow, when all the other beasts were dying like flies."

"That's just it; it is possible he is a sorcerer."

"So it has been said; no one knows where he comes from."

"Is it not true that he dug up the treasures of the Kaliphs?"

"Or more likely rifled the Darfour caravan?"

"You know nothing at all about the matter; he acquired his first million in Turkey, as a Dgellab —you understand me? A dealer in human flesh!"

"I should have said that he simply sold drams to the soldiers in the Crimea."

"Never, my dear fellow; he is too young, he is a lad of two-and-twenty—calculate yourself!"

"He is at least fifty; you are, perhaps, confusing him with his son?"

"What son?—he is a bachelor."

"What of that? Amongst ourselves, he filled a post of confidence in Prince Halim's harem."

"I swear to you he has twelve children."

"Idiot!"

"Birbante!"

"Kirata!"

The disgust I felt after listening to the quarrel, joined to the oscillations of the vessel, warned me to return to my cabin. At the moment that I was about to leave the brawling group, the man of the moon, M. Gastinel, said to me, "If you are going, as they say, to study agriculture in Egypt, do not fail to see M. Ahmed at Old Cairo. His is a superior mind; he studied in Europe, and speaks French like you and I."

I am ashamed to own it, but I scarcely listened to this good advice; my attention was for the moment not taken up with terrestrial things. The year 1867 was at that moment brought to a close; certain strong stomachs baptised 1868 with champagne; Miss Grace placed herself at the piano; I even think they danced a quadrille in a corner of the saloon; be that as it may, I do not wish to remember the

events of the next three days. The sea was so rough that the sailors themselves were more than once sufferers. One night, indeed, at dinner-time, only three people sat down at the large table, the two English ladies and the captain. I lived—if it can be called living—in a sort of dreamy stupor, annoyed night and day by the creaking of the vessel, and agitated by absurd nightmares. At one moment I thought of Miss Grace, at another I saw Ahmed again, my old Ahmed, of Brunoy, driving a plough, in the uniform of a pacha, the coat covered with gold. Often, even, when the rolling of the vessel upset the things off my wash-stand, figures would get mingled and confused in my brain; Ahmed was offering his arm to Miss Grace, and was leading her with great pomp to some fantastic altar, I knew not which, where the gods of ancient Egypt sat enthroned on bales of cotton, pyramids of sugar, and sacks of wheat. One night, when the water out of my basin was spilt in my cabin, I dreamt that the vessel opened, and I was about to perish in the largest of waves, when Miss Grace as a siren and Ahmed as a triton came to my aid; one offered me the right shoulder, the other the left; but an invisible power always separated them, notwithstanding all my efforts, and to such a distance, that my arms, spread out to the greatest extent, were unable to reach either of my preservers.

Notwithstanding all this, the "Peluse" was making a good voyage; we were going twelve or

thirteen knots, and the wind fair. On the fourth of January, at nine o'clock in the morning, the land was signalled; but this land is so indistinct that one scarcely sees it till almost upon it. Is it the lighthouse that looms yonder; or what is called Pompey's column; or simply a manufactory chimney? But we have passed the channel, and here we are in the old harbour of "Bon retour"—as the Greeks said, "Eunostos." It presented a perfect fleet of ships; the marine of the whole world disputed the place; above all, the Ottoman flag. We cast anchor in the midst of twenty-five or thirty Egyptian steamers; you could count by the hundred the vice-regal ships which crossed one another on every side. The movement, the medley of costumes, the infinite diversity of features, was perfectly dazzling. Our young English ladies searched in vain amongst the mass of floating objects for Mr. Longman's yacht; but the yacht had already signalled us, and soon a neat gig, carrying the British flag, came to interrogate us at the gangway. A young Englishman, of pleasing countenance, blushing like a girl between two ardent lovers, relinquished the tiller, gained the deck, kissed Miss Longman, and shook hands with Grace. The ladies introduced to us the master of the "Butterfly," and we to him; invitations were exchanged on every side: "Come and dine on board the yacht:" "Come and see us at Cairo;" "We count upon your visit to Ismailia, on the isthmus;" plans, promises, and

politeness without end. An hour afterwards we paddled about, like happy people, in the mud of Alexandria. It is a European town, without pavements, and as it rains frequently in winter, the soil of the streets is softened to the depth of half a foot; you walk about in a sort of I don't know what, the colour of ink, and the consistency of butter. Alexandria at this distance is neither ugly nor disagreeable; it is simply vulgar. A great many large streets, well laid down, and substantial houses, built after the latest fashion: you would call it a faubourg of Marseilles, were it not that here and there the foliage of the palm tree flourishes.

Curious population, if there was one, removing, removed, composed of the best materials but badly amalgamated; cafés everywhere — obscure cafés, sumptuous cafés, singing cafés, gambling cafés, cafés . . . . what shall I say?—by their appearance you would dedicate them to love; behind, a large curtain that opens itself to invite the customer and falls back to hide him. The traveller, accustomed to the eldorados of Marseilles, has no reason to laugh when he sees the advertisements. Here, *La Rose de Saint Flour*, there, *Orphée aux Enfers*, bits from *La Belle Hélène*, airs from the *Grande Duchesse;* a glass of eau-de-vie is never sold without a selection from Offenbach is included in the bargain. Certain establishments cultivate political songs, and of what description, God preserve us! There was in this rubbish sufficient matter to

fill a book. Music fills the streets everywhere—uncouth songs, and nameless accompaniments. Gambling is dispensed here like bad apples in Paris; an unfortunate wretch seated in the mud has two cards and three crowns before him; another unfortunate passing by, takes a card, sweeps up the fifteen francs, and then walks off.

We had introductions to a rich French merchant, who bought Egyptian cotton for the purpose of sending it to Mulhouse. He received us like old friends, and did the honours of the town most admirably. You very soon see everything—the famous column, Cleopatra's needle, the new harbour, which is not yet completed, and the ramparts in ruins. There is, close to Alexandria, a beautiful promenade along the banks of the Mahmoudieh canal: large villas, imposing palaces, gardens that would seem almost fairy-like, were it not for the pottery with which they are filled, and the iron rails which enclose them. The most beautiful of the properties is an old kiosk of Mahommed Ali; you see still, before the principal entrance by the edge of the water, a small round piece of marble pavement, shaded with verdure; it is said that upon this spot the great pacha dispensed justice. I had some little difficulty in imagining the scene, the space was so confined, but my doubts gave way before so credible a witness. Barks went and came upon the canal with their great sails without number; and on

the opposite bank several Fellahs' huts were to be seen, too like, alas! to the description that Ahmed had given me.

The garden of Mahommed Ali, which to-day, it appears, belongs to Nubar Pacha, is, it seems, one of the most beautiful in Egypt. We could easily believe it; it is an enclosure, replete with shade, freshness, and exquisite perfume. All tropical flowers joyfully flourish in it, their roots in the water, their heads to the sun; but the sight of the apartments somewhat chilled our admiration, although the Sultan Abdul-Medjid had rendered them famous by his presence. It is all too rich, too new, and above all, too European. The carpets came from London; to the lustres were still attached the tickets of Baccarat, and the paper-hangings were amongst the most elegant the manufactories of Italy could produce. This is progress, I know it full well; and for all that, one is almost tempted to say, "Progress, what would you of me?" We left, overwhelmed with bouquets, for Oriental hospitality never cedes its rights, even in the absence of the master, and we went away to dream, like Marius or Chateaubriand, upon the ruins of agriculture. What is agriculture? A great society for the purpose of culture and irrigation, that died almost before it was born. Here are the shops; there, amongst the grass, the thistles, and the castor-oil plants, some hundreds of machines, a great many of which have not even been unpacked.

Iron ruins, the most melancholy, the least picturesque, and the least durable of all; the most costly, also, for you are told of twenty-five millions lost. By whom? For what? How? I shall, no doubt, know some day or another, but the sight made me somewhat gloomy.

Luckily, here came joy and youth personified; it is Miss Grace jolted in a great hired *calèche* with the Longman family.

"You are not aware," said she, "that to-morrow we leave for Cairo. A boat awaits us at Boulaq, and we are going to ascend the Nile. Mr. Longman has an *indigestion* of Alexandria, it is a country of deadly *ennui*. All the ladies pass their time in dressing themselves, eating sweets, meditating upon the future, and running about the consulates. To the Nile! to the Nile! Most certainly we shall meet again, at least ten times, on the road. I shall not say good-bye, but *à bientôt*." With this they left us, at the full gallop of the two thin horses; the *calèche* jerked upon the uneven road, and the branches of the carob trees, that are never pruned, caught their hats as they passed along.

After this our amiable host took us back to the hotel, and said,

"If you have any letters to write, be as quick as you can; we dine at seven, and your places are laid."

Scarcely had I written three lines when I was honoured with a visit from a fellow-countryman.

"Monsieur, I have been unable to resist the desire——"

"Very well, very well, what can I do to oblige you?"

"It is I that would make your fortune."

"Good heavens! I am accustomed to my misfortunes, and they suit me to perfection."

"But would you refuse to render a signal service to Egypt? The government of His Highness are great consumers of coal; they pay for Newcastle fifty francs the ton, delivered at the port of Alexandria. I offer to take the contract at forty francs, and, if you will assist me, I will give you——"

"Thank you, sir, let us stop there; I know nothing of commercial transactions."

"I thought, nevertheless, that your studies——"

"No, sir; and, as I have my correspondence to finish, I am your most humble servant."

The man withdrew, saying, "If it is thus that countrymen are treated——"

I was scarcely seated when the door once more opened. A large man, very insinuating, had also been unable to resist the desire—and, besides which, his qualifications as a literary man——

"Ah! Why don't you speak?"

"Sir, I have come into this country conscientiously to study the progress of the government. Two volumes are the fruits of the labour and the research of many years. Two octavo volumes, sir!"

"Published?"

"Unpublished; but alas! I ought to tell you, in all sincerity, that the definite conclusion I have arrived at is not favourable to the family of Mehemet Ali. I fear even that the publication of these two powerful volumes might prejudice Europe unfavourably towards a dynasty that still enjoys certain confidences."

"You make me shudder!"

"Ah! monsieur, I shudder myself on account of it."

"I was sure of it, for at the bottom you are not wicked."

"Oh! no, not at all; but a man who has laboured, who has placed several years of his existence in a book——"

"In octavo—cannot consent to throw his work in the fire without some reasonable compensation——"

"You have thoroughly understood me."

"Thoroughly——" So well indeed that I immediately showed him the door.

He went out with an air as haughty as his forerunner had been gentle, and I heard him call out in a voice of thunder, "It is not in this manner that one makes a friend, sir!"

I followed him with the firm intention of defending my door; but, whilst I was speaking to the waiter of the hotel, a masculine voice called out to me, "How are you, old boy? You were perfectly right to kick that good-for-nothing fellow out, who practises alternately extortion and poverty. Shake hands!"

I stupidly held out my hand, and by the time I had discovered my folly, the third rascal was seated astride of a chair in the middle of my room.

"Ah ça! Do you mean to say that you don't know me?"

I excused myself on account of my bad memory; he gave me his name, a name that sounded not amiss, but I had never heard it in my life.

"My dear fellow, we have met a hundred times in Paris; you have not changed much, my boy!"

"Nevertheless——"

"All right; permit me to congratulate you upon your good looks, and to say that I shall be delighted to place myself at your service in this outlandish country."

"You are too good. Are you here on business?"

"I?—shame on you! I am come here to shoot wild fowl. This is the land of promise, my old friend. For a man like me, who kills seven out of eight snipes with a single ball, there is no place like Egypt in the world. Just permit me to arrange a party for you on Mariout Lake, and you will never forget it."

"Unfortunately, I leave to-morrow morning for Cairo."

"Oh, what does that matter? I will follow in your footsteps."

"You overwhelm me. But I have two friends, and——"

"They won't be in the way."

"They don't like shooting; and besides, I have not come here for pleasure, certain engagements——"

"So I have been told. Well, since you place yourself, with so much cordiality, at my service, I am tempted to prove the extent of your good nature. Although my income is that of a gentleman in easy circumstances, I declare to you that life here will soon become insupportable for a man without occupation. That for which one paid one louis before the American crisis will now fetch five or six. Nevertheless, I like the country, I am well received, I have energy; and if you would only urge me on a little, yes, by Jove! I would try to do something."

"I cannot urge you!"

"But you can assist me. I do not come here to borrow money of you, I only ask you, in charity, to speak one word for me. Obtain for me a written authority of any kind, so that I may be permitted to establish a newspaper, a little bank for exchange, a gambling-house, a café—anything, in fact."

"Is it possible that all these trades are not available?"

"Yes, they are; but he who robs on his own account is responsible to himself for success, whilst the man who is authorised by the Viceroy can fail when he pleases; he falls upon a bed of roses. Lucky or unlucky, his future becomes a certainty. If I gain, I put it in my pocket; if I lose, I turn

against the Government, I claim a large indemnity, the consul upholds me, Egypt trembles and pays; there is indeed very often profit in failing."

"Monsieur, you instruct me. I know something about seeking for wild-fowl; but the search after indemnities opens up a completely new horizon. Unfortunately, I have no credit here, and I can only wish you good luck. You possess quite talent enough to obtain employment for yourself."

Most assuredly he had some talent, and the proof of it was that he left me with a graceful smile and without shaking hands.

I double-locked my door, and, thanks to this precaution, I missed the visits of two people that I should have seen with pleasure. My letters finished, I dressed myself, and rushed off to M. Claude's, my new friend, who was waiting dinner. The streets of Alexandria are lighted with gas, but the stairs are not. Accordingly, having mounted to the first-floor, I took the turning to my right instead of my left —I opened the door of a store-room instead of an antechamber—and the porter who was following me with a light, found me stretched at full length upon a bale of cotton. I got up, a little confused, but not without having read, upon a large cloth envelope, the words Ahmed and Mansourah.

"Ah," said I to M. Claude, "will you satisfy my curiosity at once? You have a correspondent of the name of Ahmed?"

"I have several. It is a very common name

amongst Mussulmans, like Peter and Joseph amongst Christians."

"But this is not a surname?"

"There are no surnames; people are distinguished either by a title or a sobriquet."

"I have heard speak of an Ahmed, very clever and very rich."

"My man of Mansourah is highly spoken of."

"Do you know him?"

"By correspondence only."

"He writes French?"

"Like all Egyptians of the educated class; unless, indeed, he makes use of a secretary, for his letters are signed after the Turkish manner, by the simple addition of a blackened seal."

Madame Claude entered at this moment, we sat down to dinner, and the evening quickly passed away. Never was a repast so full of mirth, or seasoned with more cordiality and good will; our first dinner in Egypt was, in fact, an adieu to France.

About midnight, as I entered the hotel, the servant said to me, "You will find your key in the door and the candle alight; there is some one waiting for you.'

"This is too bad. Who is it?"

"A gentleman."

"What gentleman?"

"I do not know; probably some of your friends."

"Ah, *parbleu!* I shall just make him understand that, after a certain hour, we have no friends."

I entered my room in a furious rage; a great big

devil, bearded up to his eyebrows, rose upon my entrance and kissed me, saying, "Salem Alek!"

My answer was simply, "Animal!"

He burst out laughing. "Bravo, my dear fellow, you have very soon picked up the nice manners of Alexandria. I deserved a better reception, for I came on purpose to see you; I have waited ten years for you, most patiently."

I recoiled a few paces, I recognised the voice, the eyes, the whole man, and in my turn I threw my arms around his neck. It was Ahmed!

CHAPTER VI.

It is a fact easy of belief, that friendship grows to be either warm or cold in our hearts. We meet again a man of a certain disposition, to whom we had bid adieu only last year with tears in our eyes, with absolute indifference; whilst another, of a different mould, who was as nothing to us, becomes after ten years, like a brother. My acquaintance with Ahmed was very slight, since I had only met him upon one occasion, and the recollection was one of many years ago. But the young man had upon that occasion sown a productive germ, and the *souvenir* of his person had grown from that seed. The forest is reminded, after more than a century, of the traveller who, with the end of his stick, had planted a root without either care or attention; and if this stranger, in passing by, could revive old re-

miniscences, the root sprung up into a tree would welcome him as a friend. Ahmed had not the same reasons for welcoming me; but he had others. His exalted patriotism rebelled against the malevolent and absurd publications which, three times a-year, caricatured the state of Egypt. "To the devil," said he, "with those tourists' letters that are continually picking up the scandals of Alexandria. What would you say of me, if I made a journey to Paris for the purpose of bottling what I could collect in the sewers? Our country requires a man with good purposes and a pure mind, who goes right on, without stopping to amuse himself with the bagatelles to be found here, and who makes known to Europe the incalculable good that it can draw from this country." On the other hand, he admitted that he was no prophet in his country, and that he was often injured from want of moral support. "By my exertions and abilities, I could but enrich myself: it is an acomplished fact. But of what use is money to me who have no wants, and could live, like my late father, upon two piastres a day? My fortune will do no good to anyone, unless, for instance, you assist me to dispose of it. The eyes of the 'Fellahs' must be opened, and it must be proved to them by facts that the most miserable amongst them is master of his destiny. How could I render them a better service than by publishing and commenting to them upon the few millions that I have gained? My nearest neighbours, my

workmen, that touch my posterity with their fingers, refuse to explain the real cause of it. Some say that I employ sorcery, others that Saïd Pacha permitted me to draw from the treasury; the general opinion is, that my land is well cultivated because I am rich. It is the contrary that is the truth, I am rich because my land is well cultivated."

"My dear Ahmed," answered I, "if it is true that my pen can promulgate or strengthen the good effects of your example, you will make use of me as you please; nevertheless, permit me to take my breath and to calm myself a little. You must recollect that you have been as dead to me for the last ten years; you come to life again in the shape of capitalist and agriculturist—very good; but just permit me to accustom myself to the joy of seeing you alive, and relate to me how it was that the poor little 'Fellah,' who endeavoured to get himself killed at Marseilles, is become the high and mighty 'seigneur' that you are here?"

"Neither high, nor mighty, nor 'seigneur,' not even a village mayor, and more than ever a 'Fellah,' do not forget that. It depended entirely upon myself to make my way in public affairs; Saïd Pacha himself said to me, 'Choose your position and aim high.' 'Monseigneur,' answered I, 'my place is with my aged parents, who cultivate your Highness's land.' 'Very well; choose for them and yourself, in whatever province you fancy, a domain of one thousand "feddans;" it is I who pay for it.' I was

overcome by the weight of his goodness. From the moment that I came to myself again at Marseilles, after forty-five days of agony, I understood upon opening my eyes that my fortunes were about to be changed. I had been removed to the best room in the very best hotel, a celebrated surgeon dressed my wound, and I was attended night and day by two young men of my own race, who had been sent expressly from Cairo for this purpose. They informed me that His Highness wished to see me and thank me in person. The effendi, who had left me dying in a miserable tavern, had been exiled to Fazagolou, beneath a sky where even the strongest man melts away in six months, like a wax-doll.

"The hope of soon returning to Egypt and drinking of the waters of the Nile with my father and mother, accelerated my cure. At the end of April the doctor gave me my passport, and I landed on the quay at Alexandria with my two companions. They took me straight to the telegraph office; they announced my arrival to the Viceroy, who was living in No. 3 Palace, close to the town: 'A certain Ahmed-ebn-Ibrahim, your slave, solicits the favour of touching your august slippers with his unworthy beard.' My unworthy beard was not yet born, but official style cannot entertain this. The good Saïd Pacha answered in a much less pompous style. 'Let him come and kiss me, the little rascal!' Having taken our seats, we were driven in a vehicle to Palace No. 3. . . .

"Were I to live to be as old as the great pyramid of Giseh, I shall never forget one single word of that audience. Saïd Pacha, seated in an enormous arm-chair, seemed to me like Gargantua: he was certainly one of those big, good-natured persons, good livers, very agreeable, enormous eaters, and wonderful drinkers that your Rabelais sketches so pleasantly. His hand was large enough to knock down an elephant, his face large, ruddy, and covered with a bushy beard, expressed goodness, truth, generosity, and courage; although, there was a shade of cynicism that overshadowed the whole. He had the misfortune to despise all men without exception, so much so, indeed, that he did not always respect himself.

"As soon as he saw me enter, he raised himself like a huge mass, and, taking me in his arms, almost stifled me. He was really affected, and repeated three or four times, 'poor fellow,' whilst kissing me; then, all of a sudden, as if ashamed of his weakness, Saïd Pacha took me by the ear and said,—

"'It is you, is it, you rascal, who get your bones broken in protecting your master's honour? Pray who gave you permission, you oddity? . . . . Are you not aware that the bones of a Fellah are the property of the Viceroy? Sit down there.'

"I hesitated; he pushed me in the direction of a divan, upon which I fell at full length, so powerful was this extraordinary man. He commenced laughing, saying,—

"'Come, endeavour to explain to me how it is you don't hate me?'

"'Your Highness has overwhelmed me with his goodness.'

"'Idiot! I am nevertheless your master, and consequently your enemy. You come from France, and you have not read the fables of La Fontaine! Do not be ashamed, my child, I am only joking. You have behaved well, and I should not be ungrateful, although I am a Prince. Have you breakfasted?'

"'Yes, your Highness.'

"'Very well; repeat to me, without dissimulation, what they were saying about your august sovereign in that café at Marseilles.'

"'Respect forbids me——'

"'And I command you. They were accusing me? . . . . Speak out!'

"'Monstrous things.'

"'Monstrous, do you say? That must have been true. Look, am I not really a monster?'

"'No, your Highness.'

"'Rascal, do you dare to give me the lie?'

"'Power has the right to jest with itself. I am but an atom of dust at the feet of the Viceroy.'

"He kept me for nearly an hour, speaking continually; and I have preserved a strange *souvenir* of that interview, in which admiration is mingled with pity. The poor man was full of new and daring ideas, that were scattered by chance, like

a necklace of pearls of which the string is broken. He loved our country, he took an interest in our people; the favours lavished upon those around him were witnesses of his goodness; but his education had not been completed: he ignored difficult art, although indispensable for doing good in the aggregate. In like manner has he enriched some few lucky ones like myself, whilst the nation is groaning with debt. His conversation was as disjointed as his conduct. At the moment that I was rejoicing at the goodness of his heart and the high flight of his thoughts, he would perpetrate a horrible pun or a blackguardism worthy of the *corps de garde*. The eye, brilliant and limpid, shone upon me when he spoke of Egypt, the future, and all the great things to be done. But at certain moments I recoiled quite scared before a look full of suspicion. When about to dismiss me, he clapped his hands, and sent for the treasurer of his private fortune.

"'Listen,' said he, 'here is a brave fellow who desired to get himself killed, or almost killed, on my account. I shall grant you three months to find him a large and beautiful "abadieh" (which means an hereditary farm) in Lower Egypt, without prejudice to the property that he shall himself choose. In the meantime I wish him to go and see his parents, and remain in the bosom of his family. You will at once count out to him two thousand pounds, not a single piastre less, do you

hear? I allow myself to be robbed, but woe betide those who rob my friends! Ahmed, if that rascal does you out of a single para let me know; I'll send him to the White Nile, and you shall take his place!'

"I kissed the hand of the Prince, and followed the intendant, who at once paid over to me fifty thousand francs; but for the first few moments I was somewhat embarrassed with so much riches. The gold was in bags, which I piled up at the bottom of a box, the whole weighing 16 or 17 kilogrammes. I hoisted the treasure upon my shoulders and proceeded to rejoin my two friends at the gate of the palace. You will laugh at me when I tell you that my first idea was to go into the country and to bury these fifty thousand francs, no matter where. The nature of the Fellah was once more developed, after four years of study and voyage, in a young man so well acquainted with European civilization. Against my own inclination I fell back on my first step into the stupid and fatal prudence of my fellow-citizens, who hide their savings in the desert, and who know no safer investment; but with me it was the folly of a moment. I had myself driven to an honest Greek banker, who took my English gold for treasury bonds, payable at three and six months, and, as the Viceregal paper lost six per cent., I pocketed in advance three thousand francs interest, without touching my capital. I had the wherewithal to recompense my sick nurses, travel

in search of my parents, and live whilst awaiting the farm of Saïd Pacha.

"The same day I left in the express for Cairo, and the next day, without even giving myself the time to embrace my old friends, I put all my traps on board a vessel belonging to Upper Egypt. Eight days after, I once more saw my native village, the dear village of mud and straw where I was born. To the eyes of the traveller all our huts appear the same; but I can assure you that I very soon recognised mine. It was at the extreme end of the hamlet, at five hundred paces from the little hillock where I had halted; I devoured it with my eyes, although a certain invisible power prevented my running to it. I remained rooted to the spot, and the sailor who had escorted me, bearing my luggage, said to me two or three times:—'Are you changed into stone, Effendi?'

"At length I took courage, and I sprang forward at such a pace that my companion could not keep up with me. Whilst advancing I asked myself, will they recognise me? Will it be necessary to tell them my name? Father's eyes were not very good, and little Zeinab was very small when I left the country. But my mother! I am not in doubt about her, I already hear her mother's cry! At this idea I commenced crying out myself, quite out of breath and my eyes full of tears. As I approached, by degrees, it seemed to me as if the straw looked very old, and that there was no longer a door. We do

not sell the four walls, because they represent scarcely two days' labour. We are satisfied with taking the door off its hinges, and the Fellah hoists it on his back, whilst the woman takes the mats and crockery on her head.

"Stooping down, I crossed over the threshold of the beloved but desolate hut; I stooped down and kissed the spot where my father and mother had slept so long, and the little corner where I myself had tasted of that sweet and refreshing slumber that the Almighty grants to the children of the poor as a reward for their labour. My tears rained upon the ground; nevertheless, all hope had not deserted me, something within me protested against the desolation of the paternal roof. I said to myself, 'Saïd Pacha, so generous to myself, has, perhaps, interested himself about my family;' that he had sent money, that old Ibraham, enriched by this stroke of fortune, inhabited some larger and more comfortable residence. A few moments' patience and all my doubts would be solved. The sun was setting; the population, scattered in the fields, were taking the road to the village. You could already see upon the bank of the whole length of the dried-up canal a *cortége* of beasts and men. My beloved parents were, perhaps, in that lazy procession: what if I went and met them face to face? I advanced in the direction of the bank, and when within a few paces of it I sat down.

"All the inhabitants of Cheik-Ali defiled before

me; I recognised them from afar, for in our clear twilight the figures stood out against the sky as if they were carved; but no one recognised me, not even when close by. All bade me 'good even' as they passed by, and I answered them; some few got off their asses from respect for my dress, for I was dressed like an effendi; the more suspicious asked themselves the question, if I was not some treasury official, incognito, employed for the purpose of mustering their animals, and they jumped into the ravine in order to gain the village by another path. I saw the big Youssoof pass with two cows, three camels, and an ox—he must have become rich during my absence. Abdallah, the blind man, had only an old ass and two emaciated-looking goats—he must surely have got into difficulties. Little Osman, my old schoolfellow, walked proudly by the side of a woman who carried a load of grain upon her head and a child seated astride on her left shoulder. Already married, the rascal! I made these observations almost without knowing it, all the while lamenting the absence of those I loved. I was like one condemned to death, who in a sort of stupor, counts the paving stones, as he walks to execution. The last one that I recognised was old Mansour, otherwise called Abou Seïf, or Father Sabre, in consequence of a sword-cut that he had received in the wars of the great Pacha. He had already passed me by calling out 'Salaam' in a loud tone of voice, like a man who wishes it known that

he has commanded others. 'Nevertheless,' thought I to myself, 'if I do not stop that fellow there, the whole village will have had their supper in ten minutes, and be fast asleep in a quarter of an hour, and I shall know nothing of these things that concern me.' Therefore, screwing up my courage, I called out: 'Abou Seïf, are you blind, or have you lost your memory? You, who used to describe to me the battle of Nezib, so well?'

"He sprung from off his ass and ran towards me, crying out: 'My eyes are still good, thank God; but my ears are better, for I recognised you by your voice, dear Ahmed. Welcome to your native village; Allah blesses the birds that remember their nests.' At the same time he kissed me. I could restrain my impatience no longer. I said to him,

"'And my father?'

"'With God.'

"'It was written, God alone is immortal. And my mother and Zeinab?'

"'They live.'

"'Here?'

"'No; they left the country after your father's death.'

"'Where are they?'

"'At Cairo, it is reported.'

"'From whence is this known? who has seen them?'

"'Mohammed's wife met them, and spoke to them.'

"'God be praised! Listen, my old Mansour; we

will return to the village, collect your friends—ours, I should say. Light five or six lamps in the bazaar at Yakoub's, if he is still in this world, or whoever makes the coffee in this place.' I had brought some provisions in order to feast my family,—my family to-day were the people of the village. 'Above all things, do not omit to invite Mohammed; and tell him that I implore him to ascertain where, how, and in what condition his wife found my mother and sister.'

"No one asked to be invited; the Fellahs have not so many feasts in the year. Twenty-five or thirty peasants assembled around me in Yakoub's humble café. They gave me the most melancholy details of my poor father's death. It appeared that he had been chosen amongst those who were taken by the Pacha's men for the French statute labour; that is to say, to work upon that confounded isthmus. The labour expected from him was neither hard nor difficult,—some few loads of sand to be removed in a space of twenty days; but the journey took almost a month. Food became scarce, the Simoom blew, the old man, who was no longer strong, lost courage when he found himself in a strange country, and two days' fever did the rest.

"Neither my mother nor my sister was in a position to remain in a country where the strongest man scarcely earns eight sous per day. They would not live upon their friends, poor like themselves; they descended the Nile with a little band of emigrants of both sexes, who were going to seek their

fortune in Cairo, or elsewhere. They had left scarcely a year ago; it was three months since Mohammed's wife had met them in the bazaar of the capital: in which, the good creature could not tell me. 'A bazaar where they sell all sorts of things; Fatma and Zeinab kept a little shop, where I saw pumpkins in a great dish, and cucumbers in a plate.' This was all I could draw from her.

"I spent the night in drinking coffee with the good people of Cheik Ali; I left some few reminiscences with the poorest, and I once more set off before daylight, firmly resolved to do all that was possible to discover my mother and sister. To discover two women in Paris is no easy matter. You have, it is true, the police, and chance, that great architect of unforeseen meetings. Police, two years ago, were to be noticed here only by their absence; and what can one expect from chance in this perpetual sort of *bal masqué*, where every woman's face is covered and invisible? Zeinab was ten years old; at this age the girls of our nation are almost women; she was, therefore, undoubtedly veiled. Whilst, as regarded my mother, she had most certainly conformed to the usages of towns; she no doubt wore that mask in two pieces, that permits you to see but the eyes. Poor eyes, that I remember so soft and so merry, how to recognise them through the mist of tears? Evidently, the only way to discover these two women was to manage that they should recognize me; but, alas! how changed I had myself

become! Those who separate from the child, can hardly expect to recognise him as a man. There were a thousand reasons to despond; nevertheless, I never lost courage.

"My first care was to assume my old costume, and my face of sixteen years. I shaved my head, I wore the large brown felt hat, I walked about once more with naked feet, and in this pitiable get up I traversed in every direction the sixty markets of Cairo, gaping like the crows, turning my head from right to left, and stopping at every shop where two women were engaged. Nobody called me by name. I had, perhaps, rubbed against my mother's elbow, without the voice of consanguinity crying out, 'It is thy son!'

"One morning, when I was preparing to make once more, for the thirtieth time, my useless pilgrimage, I met an itinerant merchant who frequented the bazaars, offering either a chibouque, a weapon, or a shawl for sale. This one held in his hand a long inlaid guitar, such as are not made now-a-days. I tried the instrument, and I remembered that formerly people gave me the reputation of being both a poet and a vocalist in my father's country. Accordingly, the next day I resumed my walk through the sixty bazaars of the town, and I sang this song, which soon became popular:—

"'THE TWO WHITE DOVES.'

"'Upon the canal of Minieh, the lofty white

pigeon houses, striped with red and white, are reflected in the golden-coloured waters. It is the village of Cheik Ali. Oh, my village! my sweet village of Cheik Ali.

"'From the dovecots of Cheik Ali two blue pigeons have flown away, one towards the east, the other towards the west. The one is called Ahmed, the other is named Ibrahim. Poor Ahmed! Poor Ibrahim!

"'Ibrahim is dead in the east, they have buried him in the sand. Ahmed returns to the dovecot; he searches for two white doves who were his mother and his sister, the white doves are no longer there. Where is Fatma? Where is Zeinab?

"'The eagle that hovers on high, the far-seeing eagle, answers to the complaints of the blue pigeon: "Your mother Fatma and your sister Zeinab have gone down the river Nile in vessels. There was no longer any corn or maize for them in the plains of Cheik Ali. The Delta is a fan fastened with a diamond button, that button is called Cairo. Fly to Cairo, poor blue pigeon, you will there discover the two white doves."

"'The bird of the heaven, has it spoken truth? All you who listen to me, noble sons of the prophet, have you met Zeinab my sister? Do you know Fatma, the widow of Ibrahim, and the mother of Ahmed?'

"I used to sing in the highways and byways, searching amongst the crowds, and especially the

crowds composed of the poorer class. The lower class very soon befriended me; I had a good voice, and we Fellahs love music after our fashion. Several merchants invited me to sing in their shops; the slaves of the Pacha, the eunuchs belonging to the grand harem, offered me a good price to sing in the *sameliks* of their masters, or under the balconies of their mistresses. I answered, 'Those that wish to hear me can come here; I will not permit myself to be interrupted in my determination.' My audience used to throw me coppers, and sometimes even silver, for the Fellah is even more generous than he is poor. As soon as I had finished collecting my money, I used to sing this last couplet:

"'Blessed be the believers who have given me charity! The blue pigeon wants nothing. God preserves him; let this money go to the widows and orphans; to those who are orphans like Zeinab, and widows like Fatma!'

"One day when I was making my distributions of charity, two beggars burst into tears, and embracing me, cried out, 'Allah!'.... I had recovered possession of my family."

"And you well deserved it, my dear Ahmed. But this is a story of the *Arabian Nights*."

"Exactly, the cycle of the Thousand and One Nights is not yet closed, and the manners of the East are no less picturesque to-day, than they were in the time of the Kaliphs."

"Impossible! What do you say? A man of

your education, and of your notoriety, honoured as you are with your master's favour, was able to sing in the disguise of a begger in the streets, without opinion being against you?"

"What opinion? Do you think that they know in the 'Esbekiah' what goes on at the end of the bazaar? Cairo is a town containing 300,000 souls, my dear fellow. Each one lives for himself as in Paris, better than in Paris, for we do not possess newspapers that tell us of our neighbours' doings. In addition to this I was nobody, known only to fifteen or twenty friends, who had not even got wind of the anecdote. If it had been made public, no blame could have been attached to me; there are certain situations and sentiments that defy ridicule. Even you, the representative of a people most given to banter on the face of the earth, would you have jeered me about my guitar?"

"I should have admired you, my brave Ahmed. And upon my honour, I have never met a better man than yourself."

"I quite agree with you."

"But what followed?"

"What do you mean?"

"Your story is not yet finished?"

"You mistake; from that moment I have been perfectly happy. I have therefore no story to tell."

"Your mother and your sister?" . . . .

"You shall see them . . . . as much of them, at

least, as is permitted to be seen; they have their harem in my palace at Old Cairo."

"You possess a palace, and you have not yet had Madamoiselle Zeinab married?"

"No time has been lost. Zeinab is but twenty, and I have my own theory upon these premature marriages that age the women of Egypt. My sister could choose amongst beys and pachas, for she is beautiful, and much sought. She knows French, I taught her myself. She is a musician after the European fashion. She has learning, talent, and character, in fact, everything necessary to convert an honest man into single blessedness; a principle which will prove a blessing to the east."

"Amen. And this farm promised by Saïd Pacha?"

"We will visit it when you please. It is the first model farm that has as yet been created in Egypt; let us hope it will not be the last. In addition to this, the late Viceroy offered me a property of a thousand feddans or 420 hectares. You will never guess in what part I took it."

"In the desert?"

"Bravo! you know me well. But I must leave you; you must be ready to drop with sleep, and as for me, I must go and sup."

"At three in the morning!"

"Eh! certainly; you forget we are in the Rhamadan."

"You are, then, still a perfect model of Mussulman piety?"

"Why not, it is an *esprit de famille!* I love all my relations, not forgetting my father, who is in heaven."

CHAPTER VII.

THE beds are hard in the hotels of Cairo and Alexandria; the mattresses stuffed with cotton seem like boards to the traveller, whilst the bed coverings are so thin, that one feels the coldness of the nights. The ample mosquito curtains that are always torn here and there, impede your movements without preventing the entrance and exit of the mosquitos. Some one told me that they had windows that fastened, but I never met with them. It is true, that for this accommodation, uncomfortable as it is, one only pays sixteen or eighteen francs per diem. As to the eating, it goes for next to nothing, for having once tasted it, you prefer dining elsewhere, but no deduction is made. My day's work had been so hard that the cotton mattress seemed almost soft. I stretched myself at full length, the better to collect my thoughts, and above all to arrange the facts and ideas with which my memoir had been enriched by Ahmed's recital; but there was really so much of it that scarcely a minute had elapsed before I lost all recollection. I slept. Neither did the songs of the Greeks celebrating their Christmas, nor the music of the neighbour-

ing parties, nor the street altercations, disturb my slumbers. The sun rose, and the day was far advanced when my good Ahmed came to tell me that it was time for me to pack my luggage.

His costume, which I had not remarked the night before, now struck me, from its extreme simplicity. At twenty-five yards' distance there was nothing to distinguish it from the ordinary dress of the "Fellahs." It consisted of a long tunic of light blue cloth without braid, buttons, or girdle, thrown over a short vest and wide trousers of the same material. The feet, that looked as if they were naked from the rose-coloured silk stockings which covered them, were encased in large slippers of Russian leather. The red fez cap rested upon a roll of white linen, the end of which hung slightly down. You could see no other linen, with the exception of a chemise of dazzling whiteness, although neither starched nor ironed. For fear of cold he carried a light silk cloak upon his arm, of admirable texture, soft to the touch, but without ornament, and more modest in appearance than comfort. I already knew that thus attired he defied all seasons, and I know no dress better adapted to an Egyptian climate. A man should be clothed in flannel to protect himself against the heat, against the cold, and above all against the sudden changes of its temperature. The least tightness in any portion of one's dress becomes irksome, and about the feet it is perfect torment. The red fez cap is a covering at once light and warm;

you take it off only when you sleep. If you were to uncover upon entering the room of a house in Cairo, since the sun in the street is hot, and the shade of apartments damp and cold, you would catch cold ten times a day.

In oriental manners everything is illogical. If it is forbidden to enter a mosque bareheaded it is also ordained that no one should go barefooted; a Mussulman's feet, washed five or six times a day, are supposed to be clean, whilst unfortunately the hair is often the contrary. But what appears astonishing is that one braves an Egyptian sun in a cap without a shade; and a greater part of the sojourners do not even wince in the mid-day glare; the fashionables throw a light silk handkerchief over their fez caps to protect their neck, eyes, and ears.

When Ahmed had finished the description of his costume for my edification, my two fellow travellers entered the room, and I introduced them. Ahmed-ebn-Ibrahim, the Count de Najac, and Monsieur Camille du Locle. They exchanged civilities, but their astonishment was evident. They asked themselves the question by what miracle I had produced a great "Fellah" during the night. Time pressed, and I put off the explanation of this mystery until to-morrow. Ahmed called an open carriage and we started.

"It is some distance between the town and the railway station, and the road is certainly not as beautiful as those found on the borders of Brittany.

You cross bogs, puddles, coal yards, flocks, large flocks—would you believe it?—which come from the borders of the Black Sea to graze on the banks of the Nile. The horses of the country know but two paces, to walk and to gallop; but the euthusiasm of the coachmen, which is great, generally keeps them at a gallop. Ours went exceedingly fast, although we were passed by another calèche, which was jolting Miss Grace and the Longman family into a human salad. The English ladies acknowledged us with a friendly bow. Ahmed said to me:

"You know those ladies then?"

"Yes; we came from Marseilles with them."

"The youngest is very pretty."

"I don't know which is the youngest."

"The one in front on the left."

"An engaged girl, my dear fellow."

"What an adorable creature!"

"What! You have eyes for Christians, have you?"

"I have got eyes, that's all."

"And a heart?"

"Oh, dear, yes! almost entire."

"That young girl is candid and courageous. You would search a long time before you found her equal."

As we were getting in front of the English people, Ahmed said to me, "I would not wish to seek for her equal if I possessed her."

"Ah! ardent nature! I see with pleasure that the dancer of Brunoy is not defunct."

"He will live as long as possible, Inshallah!"

For three or four minutes the two carriages were dragged through a sea of mud, with the most frightful amount of jolting. We laughed, we called to one another on both sides; Miss Grace was radiant. Ahmed said three words in Arabic to the coachman, and by dint of whip we got a little in advance.

Mr. Longman and his friends fancied themselves at Epsom races; the young Englishman beat a march upon the coachman's shoulders; ours, no doubt, had good reasons for endeavouring to be first, and he rained a perfect shower of blows with his whip. The station appeared in front of us, a common-looking edifice, like all other stations in the world. We arrived a bad first, wherein a frightened and howling crowd, some Circassians, looking like sheep turned inside out, the skin outside, the wool in, formed a compact mass. Mr. Longman's conveyance was close behind us.

Ahmed sprang from the carriage, ran to the door of the other carriage, wiped with his left hand the thick mud which covered the step and offered his right hand to Miss Grace.

The young girl, somewhat bewildered, gazed at him with a cold look, opened her leather bag, and taking out a sixpence disdainfully threw it into the hand of the handsome Fellah, and springing out of the carriage gained the station. Ahmed flushed up to his ears, but he kept the piece of silver, kissed it, bowed, and said in good French,—"Thank you,

mademoiselle, a present from so fair a hand can but bring me good fortune."

At the same time he signed to one of the little Arab boys who stood about the station with pitchers full of clean water; he washed his hands, threw the child a bit of gold, and rejoined us in the vestibule. Taking the tickets, registering the baggage, and the other details of departure, occupied the next ten minutes. At length we found ourselves upon the platform; I had taken possession of a carriage with Ahmed, and I invited the ladies to join us, upon which Miss Grace remarked to Mr. Longman in English—

"We cannot surely get into the same carriage with that dirty black slave there."

Ahmed's face flushed as he answered in English—"The day upon which Sir Walter Raleigh spread his cloak beneath the feet of the Queen, Elizabeth did not inquire, 'Who is that dirty gentlemen?'"

It was Miss Grace's turn to blush now.

"Your pardon, sir," said she, "I had no intention of offending you. Oh, no! believe me, it was very far from my thoughts."

I thought, not without reason, that it was time for me to interfere; I introduced Ahmed, *my* friend, to Mr. Longman and his companions. Mr. Longman shook hands with him after the English custom, and each one took his place without further ceremony. My Paris friends, seeing that we were full in our carriage, took two places a little further on, and the train left for Cairo.

Ahmed, like Mr. Longman and me, sat with his back to the engine; and a chance, no doubt a pleasant one, placed him opposite to Miss Grace.

"Mademoiselle," said he, in English, "I very much fear that you have brought with you to the East, certain prejudices against colour and slavery."

"No, sir; why should I? England has always protected.... besides, I trust I am a Christian."

"Without doubt; but the Anglo-Saxon race, the first in the world after mine, practises strange contradictions. North America has spilt rivers of blood to emancipate the negroes, and when a negro dares to get into a public conveyance, she throws him without ceremony upon the pavement of New York."

"We are not Americans."

"I discovered that from the language you employ in conversation; but the English themselves, in their Asiatic possessions, assign an inferior place to all those who are not of European blood. With us, all races are upon an equality; not only the Abyssinian, who is of noble blood, but the negro himself, walks side by side with the hereditary owners of the soil, and I, who spring from that race, I give my hand to the Kaffir, simply because he has received light from above, and knows God. We practise that wide and truly humane tolerance in such matters, that Bonaparte explained by the mixture of races in our wives, but which I must beg of you to think has a far higher source."

"I believe it, sir; I believe it! but what is happening? It seems to me we are going backwards instead of forwards."

In fact the engine had been reversed, and we were going back into the Alexandria Station. Ahmed put his head out of window, and said, "Do not alarm yourself, mademoiselle, it is not an accident, but it is deserving of notice. Do you see that little man who is running preceded by a drum major with a long stick? That is the Consul of Prussia, a perfect gentleman, and a man of great ability. He is going to Cairo, where His Highness the Viceroy expects him to-morrow at a solemn audience. I suppose he has missed the train, and has made signs to them to return."

"What! upset so many people for one man? Consuls are not bound to keep time, I suppose?"

"They are, no doubt, mademoiselle; but there is no law to compel them. The consuls are above all Egypt. Their watches regulate the sun."

The train once more left for Cairo.

"I should like," said Ahmed, "to alter the opinions you have formed upon the condition of slaves. Slavery with us is but a mode of adoption, and often becomes a very responsible one for him who buys a soul. European servants, with their ideas of caste, often tell you, 'We are no slaves;' in Egypt it is always a slave who orders about the servants of the house. Why? Precisely because not being a person, he forms an integral part of the

master himself. He is, as it were, the extension of another individual, superior to himself. He who has bought him with money could scarcely turn him adrift without incurring censure. On the other hand, he has the right, after seven years' service, if he is dissatisfied with his condition, to demand his 'Teskèrè,' that is to say, his liberty. Slavery is so rarely taken advantage of in the Mussulman's country that the Sultans of Constantinople, sacred chiefs of the Islam, have children by female slaves, of which they are nevertheless proud. The Mamelukes, who have for ages reigned amongst us, perpetuated their race by buying children from the Caucasus, whom they adopted when they became of age. Often also, a great Egyptian lord has brought up, educated, and developed, a little piece of two-legged merchandise, without any worldly goods, whom he marries to his daughter, leaving him all he possesses. You will, without doubt, meet in Cairo ministers, generals, and magistrates, of the highest rank, whose price in their youth, has been from a thousand to fifteen hundred francs."

"You would argue, then, in favour of slavery?"

"No, mademoiselle, and I sincerely trust that it will shortly cease altogether. I have already done away with it in my house, which has a certain importance in Egypt, and serves for a pattern to more than one."

"I understood," said Mr. Longman, "that the English consuls-general had long since put a stop to all this traffic."

"The consuls are all-powerful, sir; but our morals, bad as they are, are still more powerful. Our sovereigns pretend to agree to the slightest suggestions from Europe; they publish edicts that conform to modern civilization; but the traffic in human beings will continue, be it done publicly or be it done privately, until we shall have reformed the organization of the harem."

"I trust we shall see some harems," said Miss Grace.

The rest of the party expressed the same wish.

"You shall see as many as you please," said Ahmed; "there are but too many in our unfortunate country. The harem is an odious waste of the human frame."

"What! you a Mussulman, and hold such opinions?"

"The holy Mohammed, our revered prophet, preached neither polygamy nor slavery; at best, he tolerated them by imposing certain bounds. In the actual state of our present morality, the man espouses an illiterate child, without moral education, who hardly knows that she possesses a soul. He keeps her in his house for a plaything, and, having neither leisure to watch her, nor the hope that she will guard against herself, he shuts her up in a prison, whose jailers are of no sex at all. There is nothing but slavery that could suggest such guardians. The servants even of the harems, who are numbered by hundreds in the larger establish-

ments of the country, would desire no better than to be slaves; an Egyptian girl would rather marry a beggar than remain single. Custom, then, has formed a miserable and unfortunate population, who live but for the pleasure or vanity of one man, without the hope of attaining a better lot. The master of the harem can assemble under one roof four legitimate wives, who live together in harmony, were such a thing possible, and call each other 'my sister.' He arbitrarily disposes of the slaves he gives to them. All children born in the harem are his in the eyes of the law, without privilege in favour of legitimate sons."

Miss Grace cut short this dissertation, to which she had listened, to use a mild expression, with impatience.

"English girls," said she, "do not like to let their thoughts dwell upon such matters."

"But, mademoiselle . . . ."

"I know that your intentions are good, sir. You are a reformer, and to cure the evil, you must necessarily be acquainted with it! but we shrink from touching upon improper subjects, were it even from a desire to ameliorate their condition."

"Nevertheless, mademoiselle, I pledge you my word . . . ."

"I believe you . . . I should prefer believing you to hearing a more ample explanation; if on your side you believe me, you will perceive that the organization of Mussulman families must be consider-

ably altered before the details are fit for English people to hear."

"But, mademoiselle," cried he in despair, "there have been Englishwomen who have married Mussulmans."

"Poor, miserable creatures! they renounce their faith?"

"Not at all! the wife went to church, and the husband to the mosque, and that made an excellent household."

Miss Grace bit her lips, Madame and Mademoiselle Longman commenced coughing, the young Englishman undid a large bundle of shawls and wraps, and to start a subject that shocked no one, we commenced talking about the weather.

"These carriages," said Mr. Longman, "are the most detestable in the world."

"They are made in England," answered Ahmed, "and you would like them excessively, if we were in the month of June or July; but this ventilation that one blesses in summer, loses its charm in foggy weather."

"It is indeed true," said Mrs. Longman, looking out of the window; "it is indeed a real fog, like we have in London."

Ahmed answered, "The fact is, we are moving along the bank of a vast swamp."

"In England," said Mr. Longman, "all that would have been drained long ago, and converted into good pasturage."

"But we have drained it, sir, and this vast tract would be still under culture, were it not that Englishmen have broken our banks, and violently introduced the sea amongst us."

"You are patriotic, sir."

"Passionately. And you?"

"I? judiciously—that is to say, without hate or prejudice."

"Well then, no: we do not like Europeans, because they have never known how to be useful to us or make us useful to them. They could take away 100,000,000 a year from here, without making us any poorer, on the contrary; but every one that comes here, does so with the idea of making his fortune in eight days. We do not ask better than to annex ourselves to Europe, if Europe would only give herself the trouble to identify our interests with hers; but one does not conquer a country by dispatching from time to time a band of pillagers into it."

"I can assure you, sir, that neither these ladies nor I will pillage Egypt. May she treat us with the same generosity!"

Silence followed this remark. Between ourselves, I was neither proud nor satisfied, of having introduced Ahmed. These excitable men, who burst into tirades, are always sure to throw cold water upon conversation. As far as I was concerned, who knew the man at bottom, I could scarcely help approving upon the whole; but of what use this

knowledge? Worldly society exists only by the harmonious gliding of polished appearances, the one upon the other.

A ray of sunshine came to our assistance. We had left the fogs; the smile of heaven was reflected upon Ahmed's countenance, and, without bearing malice, he set himself to do the honours of his country. The landscape was green; the thick corn stretched in long narrow strips, the clover and lucerne, healthy and of a beautiful colour, grew to the height of half a mètre in the fields, arranged like the squares upon a chess board. Here and there you perceived a mass of sugar cane, a luxurious vine, climbing over a large extent of trellis-work, a group of palms, a large coppice of dry wood sprinkled with white cotton blossoms, a few beet-roots scattered about, buffaloes here, oxen there, a horse, an ass, an ewe with her lamb, two or three goats, not properly speaking in flocks, but each animal picketed upon a little knoll of verdure; all the domestic animals appeared to us to be wretched and miserable.

"The breeds," said Ahmed, "have degenerated through the ignorance and neglect of man. The horse has become a miserable hack in the country of the proud Mameluke cavaliers. Our buffalo is lean, long in the leg, and easily tormented. It is no longer the heroic animal which, like myself, you have no doubt admired in the Pæstum marshes. Our oxen are more like playthings, nice enough to look at, but they supply but little meat and still less

work. The camel even, that antediluvian animal, is, as it were, a tale of the past. The goats are small, the sheep lean, the poultry wretched, and they lay eggs no larger than a pigeon's. All this evil is produced by man. Man will know how to remedy this if it pleases God. If you will do me the honour to visit my farm, you will see that I set a good example. A few years ago, our crop of roots (mangels, etc.) was twenty times as great as it is now; they were visited with disease, the same that was felt in England, but English roots being stronger, and better cultivated than ours, perished only in the proportion of five in the hundred, whilst our loss was represented by ninety-five—we saved only what you lost, a mere nothing. Compensation will not, however, tarry long; it has, indeed, already begun; there is no miracle impossible to soil so peculiarly blessed as that of Egypt. Just look at those heaps of black mould, your gardeners would give a golden price for them; they are the accumulations of Nile mud. The Delta is but a vast treasure composed of vegetable mould of an immeasurable profundity; our fertility, spread in thin slices upon the hardly worked land of your country, would bring about the resurrection of Europe. This is not the only blessing that God gives to us with a bountiful hand; here is the water of the Nile that winds in and out of those thousand canals in order to water the land; there is our sun of the month of January, I wish you had it in even the month of August."

Mr. Longman called our attention to a long picturesque procession which was passing by on the left of the train. It consisted of the population of a village on their way to some market or another. Men, children, and animals, gravely followed one another in file, each one carrying a package. It was unnecessary for Ahmed to call our attention to the simple grandeur of the scene—the majestic look of these humble people, who without knowing it, were draped like oriental statues.

"Strange!" exclaimed Miss Grace; "it seems to me as if we were gazing at a chapter of the Bible."

Ahmed answered her, "That expression proves to me, mademoiselle, that you are indeed worthy to see Egypt."

"But, sir, I never doubted that," she answered with a laugh.

Those who believe in crooked purposes, would be forced to admit that no such element existed in the conversation of Ahmed and the fair English girl. At some station or another a "Fellah" woman offered us some sugar-canes for sale. Ahmed, imperturbable in his politeness, bought the whole bundle; they filled the carriage, the ends protruding out of either door. My worthy friend took a knife from his pocket, cut a few pieces between the knots, and dexterously peeled them for the ladies. Miss Grace would have liked to have refused, but woman's curiosity is so strong! The young girl had read that one sucked the sugar cane, accordingly

she commenced trying to do so but without any success.

"Mademoiselle," said Ahmed, "you must tear that with your teeth, and bite it very hard."

She commenced munching a little bit, but the work was hard, and the enjoyment seemed to be but small. I was of the same opinion myself, but I dared not say so; Ahmed, however, instructed us in the art of getting at the sugar. What a perfect mill were those thirty-two teeth of his!

That which struck us most in this first glimpse of Lower Egypt, was the immense number and variety of birds that flitted and flew about everywhere. The swallows ploughed the air, in every sense of the word, in all directions; and Miss Grace was so delighted to see them again that she cried out,

"Go, you dear little things, go and catch the flies that are caught in the long eye-lashes of the Fellah girls!"

The water-wagtails run along the trenches, raising their little white tails at every step; the large kingfisher screamed and shook his gaudy wings upon the irrigating canals; goldfinches, greenfinches, and all those songsters that winter drives from our shores, seemed to be at home, and flew about in flocks; starlings chattered familiarly round man and beast, and crows hopped about in twos without taking the least notice of man, as if indeed they had made a compact with him.

"Do you know," said Ahmed, "why our country

is so full of life? It is because the Fellahs are kind, and love not to destroy. They do not understand the stupid pleasure of killing simply from having nothing else to do, or from the vanity of making a good shot. Our children even are better and more humane than yours, although I admit they have not received so brilliant an education. Count the nests that hang upon that tamarind bush, there are at least ten or twelve, and all within reach of the hands; not a single boy touches them, luckily for our harvests and for yours, for were we to destroy in winter those poor little creatures, that Europe robs of their nests or shoots in the summer, the land would soon belong to nothing but noxious insects."

"Ah, sir!" exclaimed Miss Grace, "have a little pity for poor Europe! what harm can she have done you? Can you not praise your country without abusing ours? I can assure you we should much more readily partake of your enthusiasm, if it was shown in a less aggressive form. We are not quite barbarians, although when speaking of Chinese and some Egyptians .... But, thank goodness, there are the Pyramids. Oh yes! yes! I am not mistaken, here they are!"

Ahmed murmured some excuse, interlarded with compliments, with no doubt the best intention. He endeavoured to explain that the tree was known by its fruit, and that a country happy enough to have Miss Grace in it, deserved special admiration from all mankind; but unfortunately the Pyramids put to

sudden death his attempted eloquence. Our carriage was so situated that the view we got did but small justice to the Pyramids. Almost at the same moment the two deserts of Africa and Arabia appeared on each side of the train. Mr. Longman opened his guide book, Mrs. Longman began scribbling some notes, Miss Longman murmured certain pieces of classic poetry, and Miss Grace extolled Bonaparte to a degree that would, perhaps, have humiliated Garibaldi. Already the suburbs of Cairo, with their numerous villages, large trees, and variegated agriculture, appeared. At length the train arrived at the station. The hotel porters seized upon our persons and our goods; Shepheard's Hotel took off the Longman family, the Coulomb Hotel pounced upon us. Ahmed remarked, "Do not choose; all European hotels are the same in Egypt."

He accompanied us to our destination, recommended us to the proprietor, and patiently sat down whilst we ate our breakfast. I asked after that capital appetite that I had so much admired upon a certain evening after shooting.

"Always the same," he answered; "you shall, however, judge for yourself, for you and your friends dine with me. I am already hungry, and although your food is none of the most tempting, yet in seeing you eat I am suffering the pains of Tantalus; but in what would the merit consist if one obeyed God without suffering? Thirst is harder to bear than hunger, and I hardly know if deprivation of

tobacco is not harder than either. You will see to-night in the streets, a few minutes before the cannon announces the close of the day, old smokers, the pipe in one hand, and a match in the other, so as not to lose one second of their favourite pleasure. There was a time when the stranger who smoked in public during our fast, ran great risks of having his cigar snatched out of his mouth. Was this intolerance, or rather jealousy? I hardly know; but our manners have become less vulgar. Let us go, don't dress, make yourselves quite at home."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE Hotel Coulomb opened upon the Esbekieh, that magnificent dusty garden, that, after having been first a lake, then a beautiful field, and then a mysterious grove, will soon become, by a last transformation, the Parc Monceau of Cairo. At the moment of our arrival they were taking down the iron railings which surrounded a row of mimosas, as big as oaks, and in full flower.

"Believe me," said Ahmed, "it would be much better if you had four chairs placed under a tree, and our walk for to-day can be taken without moving a step. It is Sunday; there are races, but I won't take you there, for I know that you have not come all this distance to see them; but the

whole population is abroad, and you will see a sight file past us that you will not meet with upon the Champs-Elysées."

The bargain having been made, we took possession of a nice little corner where the dust came up no further than our ankles. Oh! the splendid Carnival! Notwithstanding these common-looking frontages, that attempted to ape I know not what faubourg of Europe; notwithstanding the open cabs, in which lolled Greeks, Italians, and Frenchmen in light-coloured hats, we felt ourselves but ten miles from Paris. Everything that passed by, astonished us; a quantity of donkeys trotted round a circle in an ocean of dust! the beast is a triple one—the animal, his rider, and his proprietor; the one jogging, the other bumping, and the third pricking with a pointed stick, God knows where; here one rushes off to the devil, and there another gives vent to a nasal sort of cry, impossible to describe in writing; imagine the letter N without any accompaniment of vowels, and prolong it *ad infinitum*. Ahmed described to us, one by one, these living enigmas as they passed by. Here was a Copt, or Christian Fellah, but Christian after his own idea; there the man of Lower Egypt; here the native of Saïd; there the Berber or Nubian, the Abyssinian, the Bedouin of the desert, the true Negro, and all the varieties of his race; the Jew, the Turk, thin and haggard, unless, indeed, he happened to be bursting with fatness, and covered with gold; for this colony, already much reduced, begins

with pachas, and finishes with gendarmes. What astonished me, was the few horsemen there were; horses themselves were more scarce than I could have imagined. The hired vehicles are drawn by phantoms on four legs; the fine equipages (they are easily counted) come from London or Paris. A large caricature ambling along reminds you of the legendary Mussulman of La Courtille. The mass of the population are slighter, and more vivacious than with us. To my left, a soldier in uniform was indolently knitting a blue stocking; a little further off, children were balancing themselves in square boxes painted in streaks of yellow and red, which replaced the wooden horses and gondolas of our fairs. The women passed and repassed, covered from head to foot in dominos, some black, some blue; a few portly matrons passed, their legs stretched wide apart, in a loud, dirty costume, in which all the colours of the rainbow seemed to be united. Two friends meet, they hold out their hands, and then snatch them away, as if each feared contagion from the touch. Ahmed told us that each takes his friend's hand with the intention of kissing it, but each withdraws it as unworthy of such an honour. At the same moment an unfortunate wretch met his employer, and saluted him by kissing the bottom of his *stambouline*. The stambouline is a coat that was inaugurated in Stamboul amongst the reforms of the Sultan Mahoud. The name of Stamboul is magic, it is the Paris of the East; *Stambouli* is the fashion-

able tobacco; all that is fine, brilliant, or fashionable is decorated with the name of Stamboul. Three Mussulmans clothed in stamboulines were walking in front of us; Ahmed asked, "Can you guess which is the greatest of those three persons?"

"No; what do you mean? are they not all equal?"

"All men are classed in our country, so exactly, too, that it is impossible to make a mistake. That one that walks on the right is superior to the second in rank, and the second is superior to the third; each one knows his place and keeps it."

As he spake a fourth person stopped in front of the other three, and seemed to await their recognition; they raise the middle finger to the border of the *tarbouch;* immediately the other stooped, stretched out the right hand to the ground, placed it on his heart, on his lips, and on his forehead, and resumed his position by a quiet and majestic movement.

"Do you understand?" asked Ahmed. "The last comer is inferior to the other three; he waited until he should see if his salute would be acceptable. It is thus that the servants of a good house behave themselves in Europe, and thus should men of the world, those eternal worshippers of women, ever behave towards her. As regards the salutation itself, I conclude you have understood its meaning yourselves."

"Upon my word," answered Najac, "it appears

to me that the gestures of the poor devil seemed to say, 'I take up some dust, I rub it over my stomach, I cram it into my mouth, and I have still some left for my forehead.'"

"Not exactly. Translate it thus: 'My respect, my heart, my word, and my thought, are all yours.'"

"Dame! it is a prettier sentiment than I thought, certainly more delicate."

"But we are perfect prodigies of delicacy; and if Europe only knew us better, I can assure you she would come to school to learn amongst us."

"Ah! by Jove! What a splendid carriage! What a pity it passed by so quickly, one could see nothing."

"A large harem, no more, no less."

"What! In a 'coupé' of two places?"

"Why not, then? Numbers are of no consequence. That great big negro sitting on the left of the coachman is a eunuch. An absurd custom, I allow, but one very difficult to eradicate; we never permit an honest woman to breathe the fresh air, even in a carriage drawn by two fast trotting English horses, without such lugubrious company. It is the same in one pavilion as in another."

"I should prefer having another altogether," said Dulocle.

"And I also," answered he.

"But of what use was that great lank fellow that was running in front of the carriage?"

"Of what use? Ask him, ask his master, his

mistress, or all the citizens of Cairo, of Egypt, of the entire Mussulman population, why the great people who drive in carriages require a saïs to run before them. If anybody gives you an answer that your own common sense can accept as one, then I will deny my manhood. It is an offence against human nature, to compel a rational being to run bare-footed before an equipage."

"You accustom human nature to much graver offences."

"Are you speaking to me? No one knows it better than I do. We are still afflicted with the remains of an effete and horrible morality. The blood of man is abused, just as if the Nile would bring it back with every yearly inundation. Custom compels a master to call his servants by clapping his hands. It is therefore necessary that a servant who is doing nothing should always be standing at the door. Custom sends the saïs as an advanced guard whenever you go out in your carriage. The front doors of the houses do not shut, or shut badly; custom compels a *boab* or porter to sleep across the threshold. The asses for hire are either restive or lazy; custom ordains that in hiring a donkey you hire his proprietor with him. Our women are unable to take care of themselves, custom entrusts them to the care of eunuchs. They weary in their prisons. What can be more natural? Custom ordains that they should have *odalisques*, dancing girls, singing girls, reading girls, conjurers, and I know not what

else! all condemned to eternal celibacy, or reserved for the caprice of their masters. As by degrees the harem increases, it is necessary to double the sentinels. Calculate, if you can, the valueless amount of both sexes that accumulate in this way in a single house. And the complaint is, there are none to work! Ah, my dear friends, if you are afraid to crush the passengers beneath your wheels, tie small bells to your horses' collars. If you desire to have servants to wait upon you, put bells in your houses. To save the sleep and the health of an unfortunate *boab*, have a door that will shut. If you desire to do away with that monstrosity, the formation of eunuchs, have wives who know how to take care of themselves; and meanwhile, whilst waiting for these improvements, that will no doubt take a little time, put a padlock on the harem." And taking from his pocket a little key, he added, "Here is the only eunuch I possess to protect my mother and sister. I paid twenty-five francs for him in Paris, and he costs me nothing to feed him."

We listened to him with deep interest, but without losing anything of the sight that was perpetually changing before our eyes. A wealthy child, with a pale and unhealthy countenance, lolled upon a magnificent ass, caparisoned with silk and gold, upheld by three servants. A file of thin camels, loaded with melons, moved slowly in the direction of some stalls. Beggars passed before us in numbers, and to our astonishment we found we could count the

blind by dozens. Ahmed explained this to us by saying,

"The population perish from bad eyes; amongst every four Egyptians, you will find, I think, the first blind, the second with only one eye, the third blear-eyed, and the fourth a man like me,"—his eyes were perfect suns, I had never seen finer in my life.

"It is not," he continued, "the intensity of the light that blinds the people of the country; it is owing a little to the dust, and a great deal to want of care in infancy. He who would teach the cure of the eye to the race of Pharaoh, would, in twenty years, double the number of useful men as well as the riches of Egypt. Our one-eyed men are for the most part unfortunate wretches, mutilated by themselves or by the cowardice of their parents. In the days of Mahommed, Ibrahim, and Abbas, everyone was so fearful of being employed as a soldier, that fathers destroyed a child's eye, or cut the pupil, in order to unfit it for the military service. Now customs have altered. The viceroy, in levying troops from 16 to 18 years of age, does so with the express purpose of teaching them to read. Drill is not forgotten; you will see that our young soldiers know almost as much about the sword and the bayonet as your *chasseurs* of Vincennes. No doubt we shall never go to war on our own account; our weakness, and the rivalism of European politics, have turned Egypt into an Oriental Belgium. But

do not imagine that we are afraid of fire; our contingents served the Porte well in the Cretan war, and they distinguished themselves in Mexico, although we were in no way interested in the matter."

A bold little blackguard, with head erect, and a merry twinkle in his eye, stopped in front of us, and said in French,—

"Gentlemen, would you like to see some conjuring?"

And without waiting for an answer he commenced operations. The little rascal had neither platform, table, nor carpet; he was dressed like the other Fellahs, in a sort of blue tunic; but in a short time he showed us more wonders than the greatest professor of Paris. I am not speaking of nutmegs that he put into his right ear and made come out of his left; from his mouth, red and filled with shining teeth, like the mouth of a young dog, he brought forth at will papers full of pins, date-stones, leaden bullets, pieces of many-coloured silk, and pieces of tow on fire; he put an egg in his arm-pit and produced a pigeon that flew away; he shook his body, taking hold of himself by his ears, making himself ring like a bag full of money, although he assuredly possessed but what he earned from day to day. We threw him some money, which he caught in the palm of his hand and made to disappear immediately without a trace being left, as if to indicate that this world's goods do not remain long with us.

All this time the hours slipped by, and the horse-racing was over. The return of the fashionable world took us by surprise, so little did we observe how quickly the time had passed. Our English friends, as may be supposed, had not failed to avail themselves of an amusement so natural to their tastes; it was pleasant to find an Epsom so far south. The Longman family passed us in a carriage preceded by a saïs in gorgeous livery. They waved their hands to us as they proceeded at a rapid pace towards the shops of Moscow Street and the fantastical treasures of Khan-Khalil.

"By the way," said Ahmed, "give me your candid opinion. These English ladies take me for a savage."

"Why, not altogether! You have slightly flurried them; but women like Miss Grace, like you all the better for that. But you have not told me what you think of her."

"I know nothing of her; I love her."

"You are joking!"

"Upon my word of honour."

"Always the young man of Brunoy!"

"A little more ripe, a great deal stronger, and much more steadfast."

"I admit that she is pretty; but after all . . . ."

"What is beauty? a passing shadow. That girl has a soul, my friend!"

"Allow she has a soul, but a soul that, at the first attempt, has not sympathised with yours . . . ."

"Gracious goodness! You might search the whole Mussulman empire, embracing, as it does, Africa, Asia, and a corner of Europe, without meeting with a woman who thinks for herself, lives according to the dictates of her heart, and who was really a responsible being. At what time would you like to dine?"

"Since we dine with you, my good fellow, it seems to me that your hour should be ours."

"Not at all; you will soon learn that the Mussulman has no hours, no more than he possesses dining-rooms. He eats when he is hungry, and in whatever spot he finds himself; but when a host does himself the honour to invite his friends to partake of his repast, such as it is, it is always the host who . . . ."

"Well, well, my dear friend, we wish you to give us dinner, as soon as the cannon shall have proclaimed the day of the Rhamadan to be over; that is to say, at once, for there goes the cannon, and that beggar over there is lighting his long pipe. Come, let us get quickly into a carriage, and then off to old Cairo!"

We took the first empty carriage that passed, and the coachman, thrashing, shouting, munching a roll of bread that he had pulled out of his pocket, apostrophising the pedestrians, not only in their own persons, but making sundry allusions to the bones of their fathers, brought us, in a quarter-of-an-hour, by the most frightful roads, through an inextricable labyrinth, to the threshold of a Moorish

entrance that opened in a large white wall. Music greeted us as we stepped out of the carriage; a piano hidden somewhere in the house, and played upon by rapid fingers, executed the air of the roses from "Lalla Rookh," as if Félicien David's melody, driven from Paris by some earthquake, had returned to its original source.

Ahmed introduced us into a vast hall, where, thank God, there was nothing to remind us of European civilization. He had evidently determined to furnish his house without borrowing the least thing in the world from us, except the piano. The marble flags were covered with a thick Persian carpet; the divan which surrounded the *selamlik* was hidden by twenty or thirty Caramanian carpets, of various colours and designs. The walls, to the height of three metres, were covered with squares of Arabian delf-ware. A silken stuff, embroidered with gold, produced by industry that used to flourish in the neighbourhood of Mecca, hung down from the cornices, tastefully gathered up into festoons, after the style of the Alhambra. Light fell from a lamp of irisated glass, taken from some ruined mosque. No furniture, nothing but a quantity of rich cushions scattered upon the floor, and a few vases in bronze and silver, placed in niches.

Upon the master's arrival, chibouks and coffee were brought, those inevitable accompaniments of oriental hospitality. The coffee came from Mocha,

the cups from Japan; the filigree supports were of fine gold, and the large amber mouthpieces were surrounded by a golden band studded with diamonds. We took care to abridge the preliminaries, and thus placed Ahmed in a position to order dinner at once; but before the repast he ordered the *mèzè* to be presented to us, that complicated arrangement that the Russians call *schâle*. Upon a sandal-wood stand, encrusted with mother-of-pearl, the servants of the Fellah placed a silver salver, where fresh caviare, olives, cheese, pickled gherkins, Mandarine oranges in slices, roasted chick-peas, nuts without the shells, and white bread cut into small pieces, surrounded a bottle of "mastic," with a water bottle and four glasses. The mastic of Chio is the absinthe of the East, but an absinthe without poison, that we should do well to introduce into Europe. Our host drank nothing, from, perhaps, an overstrained scruple, for the greater number of Mussulmans do not deny themselves this. All these tit-bits having been cleared away, dinner was called for, the real dinner without pretence. Ahmed remarked that we were in a great hurry. "It is usual," said he, "in good society, to crack nuts and drink raki until every one loses his head; this lasts for two or three hours, often longer; often, indeed, the *mèzè* is prolonged to such an extent that dinner is quite forgotten."

"And the cooking awaits the good pleasure of the company?"

"Certainly. Would you prefer having to wait for it? The Mussulman orders things, but never waits for them."

"This method, however, compels you to eat detestable dishes."

"Yes; but then one has drawn indulgence from this bottle here. However, I do not wish to impose our customs upon you."

He made a sign, the *mèzè* disappeared; a young servant, who carried a napkin embroidered in gold upon his shoulder and in the right hand a ewer of the time of the kaliphs, poured water upon our fingers, after which we were permitted to dine.

"I thought," said Ahmed, "that for once in a way it would not be disagreeable to you to dine in the Arab fashion, seated upon cushions, and without other fork than five fingers. It is a somewhat barbarous custom, I am aware; nevertheless, I am assured that the court of Paris, towards the end of the last century, coquettishly plucked each leaf of the salad from the porcelain plates without the fear of greasing their white fingers. Try our method for this once, it won't kill you. The repast is purely Arab, with the exception of one dish, which was ordered from the European confectioner in the Mousky bazaar. The wines are those of Yquem and Lafitte; they came from Bordeaux, if I dare believe the merchant."

The cookery appeared to us good. We were not, however, aware that it came from the harem. The

most delicate amongst us was Camille Dulocle, in his character of poet. He commenced eating his dinner with evident dislike, but hunger soon got the better of his fancies. I have carefully preserved the bill of fare, and I present it without scruple to the criticism of gourmands.

The kabob, little bits of mutton roasted upon skewers.

Red beans in butter.

A stuffed turkey cooked in paste.

Vine leaves rolled round mincemeat and rice.

Vol-au-vent, à la Française.

The *kuftè*, or *hachis* in balls.

A cheese omelet.

Green beans.

The *baklawa*, a puff paste cake.

The *pilau*.

Every repast terminates with a pilau, because it is supposed that the grains of rice fill up the small corners that might have remained without nourishment in the stomach.

The *hochaf*, a perfumed syrup, or, more properly speaking, liquid pomatum, is eaten out of a wooden bowl with spoons made of shells. You fancied you were eating a purée of roses.

I pass over the *hors d'œuvres*, which were numerous and varied. Sour milk, gherkins, white onions, cucumbers, red-cabbage in vinegar, &c.

At the end of the repast every careful Mussulman not only soaps his hands but also his teeth.

When they had removed the table and brought back the chibouks, Ahmed said to us,

"Have you not observed a gap? That *vol-au-vent* à la Francaise that was promised you."

"True; what has become of it?"

"The confectioner, your countryman, sent it punctually, only it was empty. I sent somebody to the Mousky about it, and the man answered, 'Did you think that I was going to fill it again for twenty-five francs? A *vol-au-vent* filled costs double;' but I must tell you that I prefer letting matters remain as they are, and save myself the trouble of interfering any more to-day."

CHAPTER IX.

It was eight o'clock by our watches, and about two by Ahmed's, which was regulated every evening by the setting of the sun. We experienced certain pains in our legs, and thirst began to torment us. As regards our host, he seemed in a better humour, and, if we had let him alone, I really believe he would have given himself up, notwithstanding custom, to the soothings of *kief*. These oriental men, whatever their physical vigour and activity of thoughts may be, suffer from the climate: they are capable of most powerful efforts, but the greater portion of them are taken in repose. Our uneasi-

ness astonishes them, our desire to move about astounds them; the European, who rushes about with an object, or who dances when they sleep, appears to them as curious an animal as the squirrel who turns round in his cage; but they know how to sacrifice their tastes and habits upon the altar of hospitality. Ahmed guessed our desire; and the good fellow, who was no doubt dying of sleep, asked us how we should like to finish the evening. As for us, we cared not for sleep, but we pitied him. "My dear fellow," said I, "show us your house and send us back to the hotel; and for to-day we will cry quits. To-morrow morning we are going to see Aram Bey, the secretary of the Viceroy, who will beg an audience for us. After one o'clock we wish to go alone, without guide, in search of adventure; it is a thing that I have often tried in European capitals, and that has always succeeded. At six o'clock you will come and share our bad dinner, after which we give ourselves up to you in order to study the nocturnal customs of the Rhamadan, if you have the time to accompany us."

'At your service."

He gave a few orders in Arabic, and resumed: "The house that you are about to visit was once the ancient palace of a Mameluke who was called Mustapha Aga. Nobody knows at what time it was built; the architecture shows that of an ancient date. The third part of Cairo is in ruins; it is, as it were, a dilapidated Faubourg St. Germain. But there re-

mains still, thank God, several magnificent dwellings, and I was fortunate enough to buy one. You will perceive immediately that I have not spoilt it by the introduction of European novelties; your industry has nothing to offer us so good as the ancient luxuries of our fathers. I wish to heaven that my rich fellow-citizens were all of the same opinion. Our most beautiful edifices would not be disfigured or demolished under the excuse of progress by the rubbish of your masons, your painters, and your upholsterers. Will you take your great coats? They tell me that the court is lighted up."

It was absolutely illuminated. Eight great big fellows, like bronze statues, carried at the end of long rods eight iron brasiers of open work, in which flamed portions of resinous wood. These lurid fires smoked and crackled, darting their forked flames in every direction: it rained a sheaf-like cluster of sparks upon the white marble pavement. A gushing fountain situated in the middle of the court seemed to spout out red wine, so much did the water reflect the exact luminous colour. The whitewashed walls formed a vast quadrangle, enlivened by twenty balconies invisible to the eye; each opening was closed by a trellis-work of wood called *moucharabiès;* it seemed as if the architect had used all his efforts to avoid symmetry. The *moucharabiès*, placed as it were by chance, were of different designs. A face of the first story advanced *en tribune*, and was supported upon a magnificent granite colonnade. It

was a relic of a Grecian temple: the marble capitals were of Ptolemy's date; the Arabs had supported them up by a strange and ingenious slab of sculptured cedar. To the left of the colonnade, at the foot of the wall, a doorway tinted with a thousand colours, and embroidered with religious inscriptions, indicated the entrance to the harem, that family sanctuary. The piano that we had heard must be certainly placed in that large gallery; but it is silent now. The lights are out, unless perhaps a pair of fine eyes, hidden behind the trellis work, amused themselves at the expense of three astonished Frenchmen.

We were afterwards invited to admire a bedroom without a bed, a study without a bureau, and three bathing halls without baths. The bed is substituted by a divan, upon which one sleeps without undressing, beneath a covering of furs, according to the season of the year. It is also upon a divan that the Egyptian writes without a pen, the paper placed flat upon his left hand, and the pointed reed in his right. Books and manuscripts, like clothes, arms, and jewels are kept in coffers of cedar wood or marqueterie; the carpets are strewed with large old boxes, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, shell, or silver. The niches usually seen in these walls exhibited a world of Japanese, Chinese, Indian, or Arabian curiosities,—bronzes, delf ware, porcelain, and carved ivory work. The walls are decorated in painted arabesques, or moulded in stucco. There are no two chambers that com-

municate upon a level; you must always either ascend or descend. Ventilation circulates everywhere, for the wooden trellis-work is a substitute for windows. Everything is exquisitely clean, and smells sweetly; the stranger asks himself the question if that perfume of roses emanates from the garden or from an invisible casket. Whilst we were least thinking about it, Ahmed pushed us gently, and we found ourselves transported into a veritable paradise.

It was a grove, I should almost say a forest, where the palms, the orange trees, the myrtles, the laurustinus, the mimosas, the bananas, and the bamboos were mixed together in a friendly and inextricable confusion. Here and there an enormous tree, sycamore, olive, or fig-tree spread, umbrella-like, above the grove. Presently it was a grove where rose trees, jessamines, and pelargoniums flourished in enormous bouquets. We saw there plants rare even in Egypt; for example, the cream tree close to the coffee tree. A thousand little rills of water trickled around in canals made of terra-cotta, and flowed on to water the plants one by one. A multitude of scared birds hopped from branch to branch in the midst of many coloured lanterns and torches that had interrupted their slumbers, whilst the immoveable sphinxes and mysterious statues of Isis coldly reflected the glare upon their hardened surface. Above all this the rays of the moon shed her silvery beams upon the turbulent brightness of the illumination; the sky

was studded with a thousand stars: those eternal lamps on High, and the temporal lights of Earth mingled their shadows in the rapid waters of the Nile, for the old river flowed at our feet. Seated upon the upper step of the staircase that conducts the proprietor to his boat, we watch the large sails gliding silently by; the point of Rhoda glitters on our left, and the palace of Gisah stretches out upon the opposite bank almost in front of us. A little more light and we could see the Pyramids. A strange, wild music, almost agreeable, accompanied this grand sight; it is the noise caused by the two *Sakies* or *Norias* put in movement by the oxen who force up the water from the river to water the garden night and day. Ahmed ordered the pipes, coffee, and mastic of Chio to be brought, and we felt ourselves possessed with that sensation of quietude and placidity that at once accounts for the languor of the Oriental world.

"Ah, by Jove!" said Najac, "were he to put a turban on my head, I should quickly become a Turk. Have us taken back quickly, and immediately, to the hotel, for surely it is the veritable Lethe that flows yonder, and I do not exactly care to forget my family and my country."

Our host smiled.

"Is it not true," he answered, "that Arabian life has its charm, and that a man would willingly change the noisy and vain pleasures of Europe for this tranquil felicity?"

"A man, perhaps," answered Dulocle. "A woman, I am not quite certain about."

"All women are not Parisians, thank God! There remain surely some who prefer the reality to the pretence, and who would content themselves to be happily united without dazzling or deceiving any one."

I perceived the undercurrent of his thoughts, and I whispered to him, as he led us back towards his house, "My dear friend, woman, whether she knows it or not, is formed for domestic life; there exists, even in the most mundane, a secret instinct, which is aroused by the sight of a comfortable, elegant, and slightly retired home, where you feel that you would live well, and live for yourselves. If the greater portion of Parisian ladies dislike their establishments, it is because they are uncomfortable: is to live, to be bored from morning to night in a narrow drawer, as it were, between two unknown families, one of which dances overhead, and the other plays the piano beneath your feet? The rage for going out is a bad excuse against the inhabitable home that it costs so much to form in Paris. I know a talented artist, who is neither a good nor a bad man, but who occupies an entire house, which he has furnished with objects of art. Whether improper persons visit him or not, God knows. All, or nearly all, after having seen, visited, and searched about, are seized with an emotion which disarms them, and they give themselves up without a struggle to the

will of the proprietor. There are some who cry, my friend! For what? I would ask. Is it because the carpets are soft, the colours in good taste, or the rooms well-furnished? Precious as they may seem, these details in themselves have nought in them to soften the heart. Can you explain this miracle even by paintings, passable or excellent? You look at some magnificent ones at the Louvre without crying. No; it is that in entering a desirable habitation, a woman, be she ever so changed, recovers that taste for happiness and comfort for which nature formed her. Her coquetry evaporates, her calculations get adrift, she sacrifices all for the sake of reigning, be it but for one hour, in a *real* home. Judge, then, what would be the feelings of a really well-dispositioned girl under such circumstances!"

"You believe that——"

"I affirm that a child honestly born and taught, like Miss Grace, for example, would have more than half made up her mind, had she seen you at home."

"Nonsense, considering she hates me beforehand!"

"It's all very fine to say that; but you have rather annoyed than enlisted her in your favour; but at least you have not altogether passed by unperceived. Make your peace with her; endeavour that the Longman family pay you a visit, and when you have them here, let these walls, these divans, these carpets, these decorations, these porticos, these statues, the terraces, the Nile, and the trees of your

garden, let all these speak; you will have as many advocates as there are birds in those branches, flowers in those beds, and stars in that lovely sky."

"Inshallah! be it as God wills."

"It is then true that a believer can marry a Christian?"

"Have I not told you so? Does this idea shock your religious prejudices?"

"My prejudices? Ahmed, you are biblical."

The carriage was ready, an excellent Berlin, with two horses. He got in, notwithstanding our endeavours to prevent him, from a scruple of hospitality. It was impossible to prevent it, but at the twentieth turn of the wheels each was immersed in his own thoughts. Our four heads nodded backwards and forwards, as if to agree upon a subject that no one had brought into discussion. There is nothing like sleep for making men agree.

Ahmed deposited us, half-asleep, before the Hotel D'Orient; he aroused the *Boab*, who was fast asleep upon a wretched mattress against the door.

"To-morrow at six o'clock," said he.

"Till to-morrow."

If the mosquitoes imagined they would arouse us that night, I can safely say they were disappointed for their pains. There is a horrible café behind the hotel, where you dance, where you make a fool of yourself. I have indeed heard it said, that our brother Europeans occasionally cut one another's throats there; but the wonders of the

day, more even than physical debility, had entirely destroyed all our senses. Our sleep floated upon a torrent of noise, like the cradle of Moses upon the waters of the Nile.

My windows opened towards the north, upon a locality that I had often gone over, without remembering where I had been to. Cairo is a labyrinth. All the streets, with the exception of one or two, seemed made by chance; not only have they no names, and the houses are not in a line, but they possess neither beginning nor end: you go in at one door, you go out by a breach; you come across gardens, cemeteries, bazaars, and precipices. Everywhere ruined edifices, that no one seems to care to build up. At first sight it seems that the better half of the town is in ruins. If you take your point of view from a slightly elevated position, the prospect presents an immense platform of dirty terraces, interspersed with a few minarets here and there. The Viceroy builds palaces of noble appearance, where stone and marble are plentifully intermingled; certain rich merchants rear houses of the latest European fashion; the municipal police resolutely apply themselves to align the streets; but the lanes, the ruins, the barbarous cabins, and the custom that permitted them, are the work of several centuries. Here the picturesque is at home, and progress appears in the shape of an intruder; a Cairo metamorphosed is not at all probable for at least one hundred years to come. The Fellahs

who cultivate the suburbs, the small shopkeepers of the bazaar, the corporations of workmen, the mass of the people have simple tastes and elementary wants. What is the use of a carriage road for good people who never use a carriage? The smallest lane appears large to the pedestrian, and even to the man who rides a donkey. Those narrow tracks where the houses join, from their excessive height, affording air and shade. The accommodation is not spacious; why should it be? Poor people enter it but for the purpose of sleeping. Shops of six or seven metres square are sufficient for a sleepy, dreary commerce; notwithstanding, the proprietors make good enough fortunes, and the bad managers are not ruined by high prices. Remember that almost the whole of the population lives but from day to day, and spends its life in getting a living. The necessity of births and the certainty of deaths form a circle that does not take up much room. It is the rich or avaricious, but ever vain stranger, bustling and hurried, noisy and impulsive, that finds the roads too narrow. The Mussulman parvenus are quiet from a natural spirit of dignity. Small people hold their tongues, and extinguish themselves by their modesty. The jarrings in public life are very soft: every one knows his place, and never presumes; whilst in private life all is shrouded in impenetrable mystery. It is Europe that has upset everything here, by the importation of haste and excitement. The want of carriages comes from the

west, like the carriages themselves. Of the three hundred thousand souls who fling themselves at the feet of *Mokattan*, there are at least two hundred and fifty who would live upon the Koran, Nile water, and soft bread, without other ambition, provided the colony would not impose the ideas and customs of another race upon them. Our commerce quadruples the prices of everything, to the annoyance of a happy, or, at any rate, resigned population; we disturb an ancient and respected quietness, whose origin is derived from an African sun; we compel a peaceful population to adopt our manners and customs, whether they will or not, under the penalty of starvation, for the benefit of Europe.

The tourist, who pays his money in coming to Cairo, as he would when going to the Opera-Comique, views the town like a scene, and the population like the supernumeraries of a theatre. The right-thinking man, that is to say, he who is convinced of the consistency that unites him to those black or white likenesses of himself, questions with emotion that population so rudely transformed. What strikes you from the first, is the contrast between the miseries of the present time and the splendours of by-gone days. I am not speaking of that past of fifty or sixty centuries ago, which created the Pyramids, and so many other wonderful monuments. It would appear more than certain that the ancient masters of the soil sacrificed the lives of millions of poor people or slaves to works of pure ostentation;

but the mosques of Cairo, and those miracles of architecture, improperly called the tombs of the Kaliphs, present an amount of accumulated labour which all the arms of Egypt put together would be unable to produce in the present day. There is nothing so admirable in itself as an old mosque; the design is beautifully solid, artistically constructed, and decorated with as much taste as wealth. Almost invariably a marble fountain, attached to the sacred spot, is open to the use of the passer by; a school in close proximity to the fountain collects the children of the neighbourhood. All these works, as good as they are beautiful, date from a time which history tells us was more miserable and more troubled than our own. How comes it that men of a bygone age were able to create that which those of the present age know not even how to repair? Everything crumbles away, everything perishes, all falls miserably into dust, without the dwellers of to-day putting forth even an effort to preserve those glorious ruins. Whence does it happen that these believers permit those monuments to fall, when our scepticism is ready to disburse the expense of preserving them? In all countries, public buildings, created by real or personal contributions, present a bonus or surplus in excess of those national contributions, after their completion. Egyptians of the present day consume as little as possible, and produce, it would appear, the maximum of corporeal labour. It is quite as much as they can do to

support themselves, and find that portion which government expects. Is it that the soil has degenerated; or the state?—or is one to believe that the idiotic despotism of the Mamelukes has sunk a well so deep that it is impossible to fathom?

On the 6th of January, early in the morning, we rushed about over the town by ourselves like demented persons. How many times we lost ourselves I quite forget; it appears that the inhabitant himself often loses his way altogether, so soon as he gets out of the quarter he lives in. I went through streets, where, if two men met, it was impossible to pass one another without flattening themselves against the walls; I crossed spots where camels, sheep, and goats slept pell-mell together, beneath a dais of palm-trees; once I rushed into a perfect *cul-de-sac*, where I thought I had reached the end of the world. I violated, without any bad intentions, the mysterious retreat of some ladies, who shrieked in the most horrible manner. Chance brought us to the "quartier du Crocodile," a bad place, I suppose, for I saw European youth swarming around certain loose characters but little veiled. After having come back again six or seven times to the place we started from, having come across houses without doors and doors without houses, after avoiding mountains of cotton that rolled about upon camels' backs, and after having refused the services of fifty donkey-drivers, we debouched in the middle of the bazaar where gold, stones, chains, carpets, silken stuffs,

and precious things were heaped up in a thousand shops, narrower and lower than the smallest stalls of Paris. We we were at Khan-Khalil. It is a perfect ocean of riches. I already knew what to do, and even how you are robbed according to the usual custom; but I never suffered from it as much as upon the first occasion. The merchants shouted to us in Turkish, Arabic, and Persian; mangy dogs rubbed against our legs, beggars of all sizes and sexes pulled us by the arms, donkeys ran against us with their heads, and eunuchs in charge of women cursed us in a low voice. Pickpockets, that production of civilization, were not wanting in Cairo; they felt our badly supplied pockets, and retired majestically. With the exception of an Algerian who sold bronzes and Manchester goods, not one single shopkeeper spoke a European tongue. I confess that we felt a sort of pleasure in thus bathing, as it were, in the pure East; but the donkey-drivers understood all the languages of our country without being able to speak a word. It was quite sufficient for us to say to three brats, *locanda Coulomb*, to see us transported at a trot across the eternal difficulties of Mousky, to the door of our Hotel. Donkeys are the cabs of Cairo, as General Bonaparte has already remarked.

We finished our toilets after breakfast, (although to speak the truth dressing is almost superfluous in a town where dust rains in clouds from morning to night upon you,) and a hired carriage somewhat

more comfortable and better appointed than a Paris fiacre took us to the residence of Eram Bey.

CHAPTER X.

THE private secretary of his highness is an Armenian, and the brother-in-law of Nubar Pacha; he speaks French like a native, to say nothing of other languages, and his education has been quite European. He received us in a Parisian *salon* where some young persons of his own age, Ibrahim-Bey, Arakel Effendi and other boon companions, warbled the airs of Offenbach, commented upon Cham's last caricatures, and discoursed learnedly upon the merits of fashionable women and horses. Amiable companions, capital company, people of talent, some few of whom have left, and, I sincerely trust, have kept, a lasting and sincere *souvenir* of friendship.

Èram Bey undertook to announce our arrival to the Viceroy, who, no doubt, was already aware of it, for the slightest news is immediately brought to the chief of the state. He gave no hopes of our being received on the morrow, and, as he was forced to attend to his duties, Arakel Effendi took possession of us until evening, in order to show us the citadel, the tombs of the Kaliphs, and the Choubrah promenade. He was well informed, this same Arakel,

and looked at affairs in a proper light. Without being Egyptian by birth, for he belonged to a great Armenian family, he had imbibed a sort of adopted patriotism; his tastes, his ideas, and his choice, reminding us forcibly of Ahmed's conversation. The way in which he spoke of the Islam, had it been in Spain, would have brought him to the stake, in the good times of Isabella the Catholic; his house was arranged in the Arab style. A slave, bought, freed, and married with his money, superintended his servants. He had no harem, as far as I knew, but he ate with his fingers in a hall decorated with bronzes and modern pictures, and before a book-case where Guizot found himself side by side with Paradol and Macaulay.

The citadel that he showed us appeared to me to be more curious and picturesque than beautiful; it consists of an accumulation of enormous erections, ruinous, badly kept up, and but moderately appropriate for the intention they were made. All the Egyptian ministerial offices are collected together in an old harem of Mahommed-Ali. Imagine an enormous first-floor landing cut into the shape of a Latin cross; at the four interior angles open magnificent doors, each of which forms the entrance to an isolated apartment. If a stranger is not permitted to visit an inhabited harem, he has but to make a feeble effort in order to picture to himself the private life of a Mussulman, from the deserted harems that are shown to him. The landing repre-

sents an undivided domain where the four legitimate wives meet at every hour of the day, and live together. It is here that they kiss one another, and call each other "my sister," without any apparent jealousy. Each one has her chamber, large, medium size, or small, according to the rank of her who inhabits it, for the women take order of precedency precisely in the same manner as the men.

This is what I learnt in the first place, in the ministerial offices; but my attention was also engrossed by the administrative customs. Government houses are, in every sense of the word, "public places;" everyone comes to them, beggars, lucifer match sellers, and even, after the Rhamadan, those who sell bread and curdled milk or dates. The ministerial doors are open from morning to night, guarded, it is true, by *cavas*, but, nevertheless, open. The humble petitioner who was refused admittance would not have to cry very loud in order to be heard by the pachas. Here even the customs of the Arabian Nights, and that absolute democratic familiarity which certain Parisian excellents have much reason to learn, is to be seen! It was here that I perceived a minister seated upon his divan in an enormous hall without furniture. It was the president of the council, Ragheb Pacha himself. A chief of division stood in front of him in the most humble attitude, handing him certain papers to sign; whilst reading them his body swayed backwards and forwards with a regular movement that re-

minded one of the pendulum of a clock; this habit is inculcated in all Mussulmen schools,—they think, right or wrong, that it assists memory. I have seen distinguished physicians, professors formed at Cairo and perfected at Paris, go through the same movements whilst reading our newspapers.

When Ragheb had read the paper that he was called upon to sign, he took his seal, dipped it in ink, moistened a corner of the paper with his tongue, and applied the impression, slightly effacing it with his finger for fear that some forger should be tempted to take a copy of it: an ancient custom, and one that dates back to the time when statesmen were unable to write; after which the minister threw the paper upon the carpet for the chief of division to pick up. Such high and mighty airs would not be tolerated in Europe even by a government official at 1,500 francs; I conclude that Ragheb has suffered like indignities in his youth, and now revenges himself. We were not desirous of seeing this high personage any nearer, but we were introduced to the presence of Zulficar Pacha, minister in the interim for foreign affairs, and he naturally received us, without letters of audience, with cordial good-nature, at the same time full of dignity. He had originally been a slave, like Ratib Pacha, the commander-in-chief, like Kurchid Pacha, Khassim Pacha, and Mourad Pacha, that amiable, good, and charming man, who perpetuates with honour, the family of his old master and father-

in-law, the French Soliman Pacha. Amongst the high Egyptian functionaries, we must number a certain number of Fellahs, Mashar Pacha, Beghet Pacha, both educated at our Polytechnic school. Giaffer Pacha, the governor-general of Soudan, is the son of a Damiettian peasant. In this country of privileges, where the rich and the poor, the tax-gatherer and the official seemed separated by a great gulph, personal merit sweeps away in a moment of time all obstacles, and the man of worth is promoted more surely than with us.

Arakel showed us the mosque of Mohammed Ali, the chamber of delegates, and the historical divan where the great Pacha stroked his beard during the massacre of the Mamelukes. The mosque, for a modern building, was not wanting in character; it is almost as high as it is broad, which is not saying too much; the richness of the materials employed is beyond belief; it is a deluge of oriental alabaster raised to a height of nine or ten mètres from the ground. There, inferiority commences, that is to say, a miserable imitation of the noble material. This mixture of splendour and vulgarity occurs in almost all monuments subsequent to the occupation by the French. The Viceroys were desirous of doing much, grandly, richly, and quickly; time failed them, money also, and, above all, men. Impatience to finish the work reduced them to employ European artisans; it is thus that I explain the *Schahabaham* style, which spoils their finest works. The ancient

Sélamlik of the great man, or, if you will, his throne room, is a battle field, where magnificence and bad taste seem to struggle upon equal arms. There is nothing more grand than portions of the architecture, nothing more rich than the tissues and carpets of European manufacture; the daubs in the shape of decoration border upon the grotesque. The design most apparent in these mural paintings is a clock, reproduced twenty times, whose hands point to improbable hours. Now-a-days, all taste has vanished. The chamber of deputies or delegates is approximately furnished to a *salon* in the new Louvre. But all modern Egyptian riches appear as nothing, when, leaving the citadel, you are driven to the tombs of the Arab princes! There one sees forty or fifty edifices, each one of which affords study enough to occupy the attention of our first architects for a period of at least six months. I sincerely trust that, one day or another, they will be restored, at any rate upon paper. As to rebuilding them, no one thinks of such a thing. The inhabitants do not even visit them; this corner of the suburbs belongs to the dead, to the desert or to forgetfulness. It is the antipodes to that Choubrah avenue, to which we were immediately afterwards taken in order to regale us with the contrast.

Possessing a certain amount of credulity, those who go from Cairo to Choubrah in a well hung carriage might possibly fancy themselves in Europe. The road is wide, and bordered with sycamores and

magnificent carob trees. They say they are not forty years old; our forest trees would scarcely equal them in two centuries. The dust is more dense than upon our promenades, and the ground is less artistically levelled; but the *coupés* of London and Paris, of the best make, are met by gentlemen riders of the first rank; and if by chance the coachman who cracks his whip is seated alongside of an eunuch, this exhibition of the customs of the country may be passed by unperceived. Plenty of Italian villas of doubtful taste, but smiling and rich looking, follow one another without being alike, in the midst of agreeable little parks. If perhaps one were to enter a little more into detail, we should discover a few of the miserable fellah huts; but the tourist journeys but to gather the flowers of everything. At the same time there is a moment where the happy villas, the miserable hovels, the gardens, the carriages, the horsemen, the dust, and even the beautiful sycamores of the road, are effaced as if by a miracle before the brilliant splendour of the setting sun.

The sun enlightens the whole world, it is said; think nothing of this. That white disc, yellowish and ofttimes red, that the people of northern countries see descend beneath the horizon when the clouds hide it not, is but the pale sad image of the sun of Osiris, all powerful God in Egypt, who rises in an eruption and sets in a conflagration; but no sooner are the flames extinguished, than beware of

the cold! Night falls like a leaden cloak upon badly sheltered shoulders.

All the pedestrians cover themselves, you crouch in the bottom of the carriages, the coachmen turn round, the horses become anxious; it is a question of who gets home first. As we approached Shepherd's Hotel, which is at the entrance of the town, I left my friends to pursue their journey, whilst I paid a visit to the Longman family. My English friends seemed to be established comfortably enough, and charmed with all they had seen since their arrival. "Cairo is a perfect world!" said Miss Grace, "and the most marvellous of all possible worlds. You could run about it for twenty years without feeling the least fatigue, for there is place for everything except *ennui*. We have searched the town in every sense of the word, and I feel myself intoxicated with the customs, the colours, and, above all, the admirable variety of things that I have seen. Mr. Longman was almost annoyed to-day, when he heard that our vessel would not be ready for eight days. As far as I am concerned I wish it was six weeks; it seems to me that my curiosity will never be satisfied. Do you know that these poor Egyptians are excellent persons, and a thousand times more hospitable than one would think? This morning our carriage was overturned in a road perhaps a little too picturesque. The crowd gathered around us; and in the twinkling of an eye the carriage was replaced upon its wheels, the horses raised up by men's arms, and the

traces repaired and attached. An old gentleman, as black as a coal, picked me up like a child out of the dust, and placed me upon the cushions with gentle tenderness. They all refused our money. It is evident that these savages possess a delicacy quite unknown to the lower classes of our towns. There is much misery in the East, but, extraordinary to say, there is no *canaille*."

I complimented her upon her sudden conversion. "For, indeed, yesterday you were rather hard upon the Fellah world."

She blushed slightly; "that is to say," said she, "that half-barbarous people, like half-civilised ones, are insupportable creatures. The great black gorilla that you introduced to us is not civilised, although he has certain pretensions. He has mixed with civilisation. Under the pretext that he talks correctly enough one or two European languages, he appears to think himself our equal, as if the superiority of our intelligence and our customs did not place him and the rest of his Mussulmen brothers beneath our feet!"

"I feel certain, mademoiselle, that were you to know him a little better you would do him more justice."

I related, in a few words, the history of my gallant friend; I described the interior that we had so much admired the evening before, and I took upon myself to add, "He is a man that a little eloquence and a great deal of gentleness would lead with little trouble to adopt the doctrine of the Calvinists." She started;

I thought I perceived that spirit of proselytism, that awakes at the least word in truly English hearts, beaming in her fine eyes. "Are you making fun of me? We know that Mussulmen have converted, by persuasion or by force, millions of Christians; but neither seduction or menace has snatched one soul from the Mahomedan faith."

"I know what I say. Ahmed is not made of the stuff that produces renegades; but I maintain that both Mussulmen and Calvinists would kiss one another did they but know more of each other's religion."

"Fie! horrible!"

"We shall speak again about this, Miss Grace, the subject is a worthy one. In the meantime, I must beg of you ladies to spare Mr. Longman after dinner. We have arranged to walk through the streets and to study manners and customs under Ahmed's guidance."

"Shall we be in the way?" asked the young lady.

"Very much, perhaps; under any circumstances, should Mr. Longman be satisfied with his guide, he might arrange with him several general expeditions."

My offer was agreed upon, and two hours after, the young master of the yacht joined us at our hotel. He stretched out his hand to the "Fellah," saying, "I trust, sir, you have forgotten the slight inconveniences of the journey. Whilst, as far as we are concerned, we already know enough of you to have

the desire to know more. The ladies will take tea towards eleven o'clock, and they await us all at Shepherd's Hotel."

This little compliment, seasoned with a slightly frigid politeness, but manifestly sincere, delighted Ahmed to the greatest degree. He could scarcely find words to answer, and five minutes afterwards, when in the street, he approached and whispered in my ear, "Great Heavens! what on earth has taken place?"

"Nothing, my dear fellow; only I have told them your history, and they are aware at Shepherd's Hotel that you are not a mere nonentity."

The streets of Cairo are not lighted up by night, either by the police or by people employed to do so, and why should they be? The shops close at night, commerce is over, every one goes home—private life begins. Mussulmans are not in the habit of visiting one another as we do. If you wish to go out after dinner, you would do wisely to light yourself. The markets where necessaries are sold during the nights of the Rhamadan being the exception, they are partially illuminated; but all the rest of the town is plunged in profound darkness, which the large lanterns of occasional pedestrians illuminate without dissipating. Ahmed had provided two lanterns, which his servants carried upon their heads in rear of our small caravan. We walked, slightly dazzled by the light of the lanterns; the dogs, startled, fled at our approach, and barked at us in

the distance. Those poor creatures live upon anything, and gain their subsistence by clearing away the thousand horrors scattered in the streets. This was all we encountered for the first quarter of an hour; there was not the slightest trace of any police."

"Are you aware," said Mr Longman, "that public safety might be somewhat better protected?"

"It is better as it is," answered Ahmed. "We pay twenty times less for guardians of the people than you do in London and Paris, and one's person runs twenty times less risk. The attempts against human life, highway robbery, or the crimes of housebreaking are almost unknown amongst us. It is not that the Fellah possesses unlimited respect for the property of others,—so little respect is paid to his. Those everlasting thieves have always picked up without scruple everything that came to hand. If they crossed a field of vegetables, and the owner was absent, I should fear the result; but they are naturally gentle, violence is repugnant to their nature; there is a difference between innocent thieving and what is called, amongst you people, qualified theft."

This conversation brought us to the entrance of a noisy, lighted street, where crowds of buyers, beggars, and sight-seers moved from shop to shop. Ahmed preceded us under a sort of shed large and well ventilated, for we could see the sky between the long straw that composed the roof. A few lamps

shed their rays upon a motley crowd of a hundred persons of all colours, some seated upon benches, some stretched upon mats; they made a sort of raised platform for us, on which was placed six chairs. No sooner were we seated than a melancholy orchestra broke out into a still more melancholy tune, and a great big, unwieldy, masculine creature bounded into an open space in the centre, making the ornaments upon her arms and ankles ring like castanets.

It was a posture girl. A girl, did I say? I have made a mistake, I should have said, more properly speaking, a man. She or he throws the arms about, twists the body, smiles. Oh, horror! it made the very marrow run cold in our bones; the sight was beyond conception disgusting, so much so, that we took an early opportunity of leaving the place.

"What the deuce made you show us such a sight," said I, to our guide.

"For more than one reason, my dear friend. Besides, I would not have you to think that I wish to hide our sore places. Honesty compels me to make you acquainted with the bad and the good. You have just seen a sight that Orientals of bygone days, the Greeks of the most magnificent epoch, and the most illustrious Romans, found perfectly natural amusement. I must add that the savages of America, those primitive beings, followed in the same course, until Columbus made his first visits. I am aware that our people are behind-hand; I own it. We are

in the thirteenth century of our era. It is scarce fifty years ago when a large majority of the Egyptian people took delight in those sensual dances that are ignominiously put out of sight to-day. I venture to say that if you searched well you would only find thirty '*Kowals*' amongst the three hundred thousand inhabitants of Cairo. They do not pay their way, the unfortunates! Their supporters, as you may perceive, are found amongst the drinkers of raki, the consumers of haschich, and the refuse of bad Mussulmen. I do not tell you that such sights scandalise our good people as much as they do yours. If our manners have become refined, our modesty is still not the same as yours: we want delicacy; it requires, perhaps, a little time to eradicate from our souls a sort of hereditary brutality of feeling. The feelings of the Viceroys can do much in such matters. Abbas almost brought on a *coup d'état* by banishing the Almées from Upper Egypt; a sign from Ismail Pacha was to send to the devil the last of the '*Kowals*,' and our present sovereign, God help us! takes no interest in such matters, either for or against them. Who knows but that you may have been the last to witness a celebrated and infamous nuisance of long standing? Bathylle, the dancer, who is the delight of Rome, was a Fellah like myself."

We arrived before a large stone *façade*, somewhat disfigured by a large framework for illuminations, which were, however, not alight. Najac was anxious to know why it was that the palaces of Cairo, and

houses of importance affected this extraordinary sort of decoration. Wood painted red and green, iron stands, and lamps without oil, are not ornaments to be kept during the whole of the year.

"You are quite right," said Ahmed; "but custom ordains that one should illuminate upon each feast of his Highness, and the officials little and big think they are proving their loyalism by keeping for ever the monuments of their homage. Enter: we are at his excellency El-Arrousay, ulèma, cheik-ul-islam, Doctor of Theology, rector of the El-Azhar mosque, and Mussulman Archbishop.

In a vast court-yard, sheltered by a screen of dazzling colours, a hundred devotees celebrated the ordinances of God. Some were seated upon their heels, others stood upon their feet or were formed in a circle; a few long benches of antique form were at the disposal of the comers and goers, for the court-yard of the grand cheik was open to all. We were made to sit down; the selamlik opened on our right, the harem was closed on our left, a little black eunuch served us with the usual stereotyped refreshments, and the ulèma's son, a fine man, about forty years of age, welcomed us in the name of his father, who was absent. The group of the faithful, who were seated, were employed in the services of the "*Zikr*," that is to say, an invocation. The bass voices, singularly deep and strong, repeated incessantly the name of Allah; a tenor enumerated the attributes of the divinity—"How powerful Thou

art! How gentle! How merciful! How generous!" and then the choir repeated "Allah!" The scene was grand in its simplicity. This devotion, void of pomp, and without images, is it not the most worthy that man can offer to his God? Our emotion was doubled when we remembered that all those Mussulmans were taught from their youth up to execrate the name of Christians.

"If you desire to retain your impressions," said Ahmed, "let us leave this."

"Why?"

"Because all this will soon be spoilt. Do you see those fellows there, who begin to sway about their heads like the white bear in the Zoological Gardens? Do you not observe that the bass voices are becoming harsh and discordant? The Zikr is, in itself, a very fine thing; but they push it too far sometimes, and it becomes corrupted by abuse. Those movements of the head, and those repeated cries, confuse a man, until at length he is thrown into a sort of mad stupor, which places the believer on a level with the beast. When this practice was allowed in the army, the soldiers used to carry it to that pitch that they were unable to attend to their duties, and the service came to a standstill. The custom will die out, and rather sooner than later, for the Islam is fast returning to his native simplicity. The dervishes who dance the deuxtemps waltz are no longer objects of misapprehension. The filthy *santons* and brawlers lose credit with the people; the

police take them up, shave and wash them, and then send them away to work, without anyone complaining of the sacrilege." He glanced at his watch, and added, "We have got nearly an hour to spare before it is time to return to Shepherd's Hotel; would you like to descend to one of those places of resort that Eugene Sue has revealed to the fashionable world of Paris?"

"A *tapis franc* of Cairo?"

"Without being armed, and without policemen?"

"Do not be alarmed; I am going to show you some savages and some wretches; but the politest people in the world to the inhabitants. Iacine," said he, "conduct us to that café of Bab-el-Baher, where your friends met to drink the beer of the country. Iacine is a Nubian gentleman, born between the first and second cataract, under the tropic of Cancer. Nubians are the Auvergnats of Cairo; they indulge in the most humble occupations, the most disdained, and the least lucrative; they are door-keepers, water-carriers, sweepers, and executioners, but good Mussulmen, and consequently very honest."

"But here we are out of the town?"

"No, we are only crossing a garden; take care of your feet; there are pits, heaps of rubbish, and other things to avoid."

The head of our procession walked round a great cage of reeds without finding an entrance: all of a sudden our leader seemed to disappear in the ground, we followed him into the darkness, and we found

ourselves in a place walled on this side, covered with trellis on that, without any furniture or persons, and occupied for the present by a large bowl of effervescing milk. Soon everything became animated. Iacine gives a loud cry, and a face of the most beautiful brown colour rises as it were from the ground. It is the master of the place, the Nubian brewer. He claps his hands, another statue rises from the earth, shouting out a series of cries. It is Abdallah, the waiter of the café, all dressed in nature's black. Ahmed said in Arab, "My children, I pay the *bouza* to-night for those who will come and drink. The basin is full, I trust the beer is fresh?"

"Better taste!" and the brewer filled a demi-calabash, which he handed round.

Ahmed did not hesitate; he seemed even to appreciate the stuff, and I, without warning, swallowed a mouthful of the deceitful liquid, that united the taste of ink with the colour of milk. I could have warned my companions; I ought, perhaps, to have done so, but it would have been too hard to die from poison, unaccompanied by them. I passed the calabash without saying a word: Mr. Longman, reassured by my example, took a large mouthful, puffed out his cheeks, shut his mouth hard, opened his eyes very wide, but perceiving that I was laughing at him, and thinking, perhaps, that an English traveller ought rather to suffer than to own himself conquered, made an heroic effort; the ink was swallowed,

nothing reappeared; but on observing him I noticed that he was scarlet. Najac seized the cup, now three parts full, with the assurance of a man that counts upon the tests of others. The drink almost choked him, so much so, that his joyous face became purple, the liquid poured from his nose, his mouth, and perhaps, even, from his eyes and ears; sprinkling those who surrounded him, and in particular Dulocle, who exclaimed, "Thank you; I sha'n't taste any!"

Whilst this comedy was proceeding, the Boabs, the doorkeepers, and other Nubians entered incognito; the place was almost filled. Had little Abdallah made a battue in the neighbourhood, or did all these poor devils come together spontaneously from the smell of the beer? Nobody knew; but the contents of the vessel began speedily to be emptied, by the constant circulation of the cup amongst them. A look of contentment and gaiety spread itself over those black faces, that one would have said had been fresh polished, they glistened so much! It was quite unnecessary for Iacine, or El Iacine, or even Eliacin, let us write his name like the author of *Athalie*, to invite these poor people to sing or to dance; they set-to to sing like maniacs, flinging their legs about, clapping their hands, showing their teeth; thereby proving, a thing not displeasing to the disciples of Gratiolet, that man is akin to a monkey. I observed also, having let a demi-piaster fall upon the ground, that one or two

picked it up with their toes, as if by instinct. The good people, did they possess four hands? I am not far out in thinking so, and I recommend the question to the notice of those physiologists who shall succeed us in visiting Egypt.

Ahmed was preoccupied with another idea.

"Do you observe," said he, "that this portion of the population, the most miserable in Cairo, permits itself to accept of favours in the quietest manner, without exhibiting false pride, or base envy? Fancy such a scene in one of the cabarets of your faubourgs. Two things would happen—either the poor would answer you with that insolent familiarity, which is the punishment of degraded riches, or they would repulse with energy your most cordial endeavours at politeness. Only once in my life, whilst in your country, did I stray into a ball given by your water-carriers. I left the half of my coat and the whole of my hat amongst them, too glad to escape with whole bones. These French barbarians fancied that we had gone in there, like the Romans into Sabinia, for the purpose of ravishing their stout better halves. The mingling of the sexes, which you consider an element of concord, the lower classes take umbrage at, and makes them dislike the intrusion of the rich. Here, there is nothing of the sort; men alone take part in public life; they are classed; each one knows his place, you can mingle every grade of society without their forgetting themselves or becoming confounded."

Whilst he was thus philosophising, these Nubian savages, animated by the beer, by singing, by dancing, and by the souvenirs of the land of their birth, became delirious with joy. By the light of our two lanterns, this enormous mass of half-naked creatures presented the picture of a perfect inferno, but one composed of good poor devils. They went through their performances, not, it would appear, for the enjoyment of those who had treated them, but simply for their own amusement and delectation. When we bade them good-bye they accompanied us in a body to the limits of their territory; but the orgie was kept up with greater vigour as soon as our backs were turned.

Ahmed's carriage awaited us a hundred paces from there. It took us slowly to Shepherd's Hotel, where we found Miss Grace dispensing tea, whilst Mr. Longman gave a description of what he had seen, amid a perfect buzz of conversation.

Ahmed seemed to have lost his fluency of speech on the road. I could not imagine what timidity paralysed him, he merely explained himself by monosyllables; and, extraordinary to relate, the valiant Miss Thornton, so free in expressing her opinions the previous evening, was even more silent than he. It was I who carried on the conversation, it was I who invited our English friends to the Fellah's palace, and to his farm of southern Egypt. He found just sufficient conversation to say that the Delta, like Belgium, is ploughed up by railways in

every direction, and that it took scarcely four hours between Cairo and Mansourah. The youngest Miss Longman was the daughter of a large landed proprietor in Yorkshire, who cultivated several acres of land around his château, and although we were assuredly not desirous of entering into a discussion on the subject of the production of corn or cotton, that intelligent curiosity that distinguishes all well-born English people favoured the success of my undertaking. A party was arranged, not only to lunch in that beautiful garden in old Cairo, but also a visit was determined upon to see the farm. Ahmed did not appear very delighted, although he found his tongue on our way back to the hotel. If we had only given him his tether, he would have kept us listening to the perfections of Miss Grace until the morning; but we were dying of fatigue, and the adieu we bade him on our arrival, forbade any reply. What a day! and to be able to say that I have passed seventy such days in Egypt, quite as full of incident, more or less, as this one!

CHAPTER XI.

On the morrow, towards two o'clock in the afternoon, the Viceroy granted us an audience in the Kasr-on-Nile palace, in a vast hall glittering with silk

and gold. It is said that the furnishing of this room cost a million and a half, the truth of which statement I do not for one moment doubt. The "Fellah Prince" (it is his own desire that he should be thus styled) received us with dignity and grace, conversing with us in our own language for a full hour. At the commencement of the conversation he expressed himself with difficulty, and seemed as if he were searching for words; but when he became excited, particularly upon subjects that he took special interest in, words were not wanting, and his conversation seemed to flow with ease. The subject that principally interested him at this moment was the progress of cultivation in the country. He enumerated with spirit the principal *desiderata* for Egypt, and in doing so traced out a complete programme of studies. "We want arms to labour; how supply them when coals cost from 50 to 100 francs the ton, according to the market? Why does our wheat suffer a depreciation of one third of its value in European markets? It is sold for twenty francs, when the others fetch thirty. From whence does it obtain that sourness, or that musk-like perfume which distinguishes it? Is this fault accounted for by the way it is grown or gathered by the 'Fellahs,' or by the nature of the soil, which is absolutely destitute of phosphates? Would it do any good to purchase manures, and which ones? Is the disease that destroys our cotton an incurable one? Our sugar-cane harvests are magnificent, but we get little

sugar from them. Why is this? Is there any sort of cultivation in Europe or elsewhere that Egypt could borrow with advantage? Is there a remedy to prevent animals and plants degenerating? To what extent is the Government to blame in this general misery?"

These questions were fixed one by one in my memory, and the last was not one that gave me the least to think about. That nations do exist who are badly governed is not a matter of astonishment: but a prince who is not deceived by illusions, and forestalls criticism by criticising most severely himself, is a thing that the traveller does not meet with every day.

The Viceroy said to us, "I am desirous that you should visit Upper and Lower Egypt. You will ascend the Nile in a steamer that I shall send you; care shall be taken that nothing is wanting. Do not bother yourselves about provisions or attendance, in four days, at the arsenal of Boulaq, you will only have to go on board. It is probable that I may meet you in Thebes, where I have ordered certain excavations to be made. In any case, you will meet my three sons, who every year undertake a small educational tour."

On the termination of this audience, we came to the conclusion amongst ourselves, that Scotch hospitality must have taken up winter-quarters in Egypt; for, in fact, if the greatest French or German writer were to present his homage to the august sovereign

of the United Kingdom, he would be left to shift for himself, as far as steamers, railways, and hotels were concerned. Ibrahim-Bey, who conducted us to the door of the grand selamlik, called out to us as we were leaving, "I wish you joy. Arakel will be your guide, and your interpreter, in fact, your *michmandar*." Nothing could be more agreeable to us. Arakel had done the voyage of the Nile with Prevost-Paradol and poor Gramont-Caderousse; he knew Upper Egypt at his fingers' ends, and when we got homesick, if such a thing should occur, he could talk to us of Paris.

We made a short stay with the aides-de-camp, and towards half-past three, the carriage, which we had kept, took us to lunch at Ahmed's. The servants showed us at once into the garden, pointing to the Nile. I therefore concluded that the party had gone upon the water. They did not, however, keep us long waiting, a large boat with six rowers landing them almost immediately at the foot of the terrace. The ladies had pillaged the garden, they were crowned with wreaths of flowers. The best understanding seemed to exist between young Egypt and old England. Lunch was spread under a sort of tunnel covered with jasmine. "If you wish to send away some of the real perfume of my country," said Ahmed, "pluck some of these flowers, and put them in a letter; they will arrive without losing their scent, be it to London or to Paris." We took care to accept the invitation, whilst Miss Grace lightly

exclaimed, "As to my family, why, I have none, and I could not send a flower to my Valentine, because I don't know his address; but if such a person exists, which I very much doubt, be good enough to tell me where I shall find him."

Ahmed blushed up to the ears; he raised his right hand up to his tarbouch, but he could find no answer, so we attacked the luncheon. The soil furnished mandarines (oranges with red pulp), fresh dates, something like Agen plums, bananas, everything in fact except some deep-coloured Xeres that Miss Longman tasted with evident relish.

"That is Xeres from Mansourah," said Ahmed. "The Koran forbids that I should drink it, but not that I should make it, and I send a hundred *hectolitres*, be the year good or bad, to the Alexandrian market. Our ancestors were vine-dressers, the ancient monuments prove it; why should we not do as they did? I cultivate opium also, and I get the best price for it, although I have never tasted it. Better still the castor-oil plants that I cultivate in Upper Egypt, furnish enough oil to grease the half of Europe; we do not use it, except, perhaps to oil the machines, which do well with it, and are seldom out of order."

We rose from our seats and sauntered into the garden.

"What an extraordinary young man your friend is," said the English girl to me; "he is intelligent and amiable, but he is clownish."

"The reason is, that Western education possesses delicate points unknown to the man of the East."

"Oh, I can clearly perceive a perfect gulf between them and us, notwithstanding this man is a good son and a good brother. He has brought up Mademoiselle Zeinab excessively well."

"You have seen her, then?"

"Certainly, on our arrival."

"Did you go into the harem?"

"I should think so. It was the third to-day; but by far the prettiest, the cleanest, and the most sensible of all the three. Early this morning, one of our countrywomen who lives in Cairo, took us to see the wife of an Arabian or Turkish dignitary, I do not precisely know which. The woman could no more understand our language than we could understand hers; she received us with great state in the midst of eighteen or twenty servants, not one of whom had any pretensions to good looks. They made us sit down upon a divan, and presented each of us with a cup of coffee, and also, what do you think? a pipe! Yes, sir, a pipe with a stem as long as a broom handle! The lady of the house set us the example, and commenced smoking like a Swiss. It appears that we should have given the greatest possible offence by refusing to do as she did; accordingly I commenced puffing away as hard as I could, blowing into this gilt wooden tube. At the end of three minutes the mistress of the house rose, bowed to us and retired, but shortly returned in a different dress. She sat

down again, ordering some fresh pipes and cups. We could not understand it at all, but we emptied our cups and blew enough smoke to blind ourselves. The same thing occurred ten times; ten different dresses! ten cups! and ten chiboques! and this would have gone on *ad infinitum* if we had not taken our leave. It appears that the ceremony might have continued till evening, but we were desirous of breathing the fresh air, and above all shaking our unfortunate dresses to get rid of the smell of that odious tobacco. What a life these Mussulman women lead! I can understand the meaning of the toilettes without agreeing in it. I even believe the women dress themselves less for the sake of pleasing than to rival other women in the display of such things. If I was condemned to such laborious dressings and undressings I should, ah! a hundred times, prefer to die upon the spot. The other harem that we were shown was richer it appeared; the master had four great big wives, more ugly than pretty, slovenly, and all the rest of the same entertainment over again. The inhabitants of these harems, curiously mingled together, consisted of some eighty or a hundred persons. They danced for us, very badly in my opinion, they sang for us, cruelly false, to say nothing of the coffee and pipes which seemed to form the basis of the conversation. The chief spouse eventually sent for an old buffoon, who commenced turning round me with unintelligible cries, faces,

and contortions; whilst vainly endeavouring to understand the meaning of this pantomime, Mrs. Longman and the person who brought us lost all patience, and hastily dragged me off. Here, we felt transported to a better world. Mons. Ahmed's mother, without being able to speak to us, welcomed us most cordially. Zeinab, who appears to be about my age, is very beautiful, modest in her manner, thoughtful, and much occupied with her household, pretty well read, and with such a heart! It is not affection that she has for her brother, it is adoration."

"She does him but justice. I have already told you how she behaved to his family."

"He is well repaid; but why does he not marry? Zeinab and his good mother would grieve were he to turn into an old bachelor."

"Old bachelor! he is only thirty, but if you happen to know in England or the colonies a young girl who resembles you, be it ever so little, kindly tell me, and we will make her fortune and insure her happiness in less than no time."

"For shame! How could you expect an Englishwoman and a Christian?".....

"The duty of a Christian is to be good, and the duty of an Englishwoman is to be active and intelligent. Ahmed is the architect of a great and good work; why should he not find a woman courageous enough to divide the work and devote herself to him?"

"Should I meet with such a person, I will let you

know; but do not depend upon it too much, my dear sir. There is Mrs. Longman calling me."

Mrs. Longman was not calling her, but she ran into the garden with her sister-in-law and commenced picking a basket of mandarin oranges.

I rejoined my friends, where I found the young Englishman relating to them what his wife had evidently confided to him. How Miss Grace had been treated that same morning in a somewhat large harem. It appeared that the buffoon of Cairo thought that nothing was so amusing as to portray all sorts of vulgarities unfit for any modest girl to look upon; Miss Thornton had been utterly unable to comprehend this disgusting exhibition: but Ahmed bit his lips at Mr. Longman's recital, and one could see the tears coming into his eyes.

"Yes," said he, "the education given to Mussulman women is stupid, monstrous, and infamous. They break them in as you do your sporting dogs, they learn but to acquire an appetite for sensuality. We turn them into inferior beings, avaricious and vile, the daily commerce with whom is degrading to man. If the Harem is an unhealthy centre for the souls of husbands and fathers, what must it be to the children? The real scourge of the East is neither tobacco, opium, or haschichs—it is woman. At the same time, you must take care not to think that this degradation of the sex occurs in all ranks of society."

"Monsieur Ahmed!" called Miss Longman, "please come here; Grace is trying to make me be-

lieve that that cupola lighted by glass lenses is an Arabian hot air bath."

"Nothing more true, Miss Longman; it is at your service!"

Poor fellow! another *faux pas!* The three English girls blushed, and the brave Grace proudly answered,

"Thank you, sir, I prefer bathing in the Nile."

"Would you permit me to accompany you, in case of drowning?"

Another mistake.

"The fact is, mademoiselle, that the waters of the Nile are so swift, that you are easily drowned unless you are strong swimmers."

"We are strong swimmers, sir."

He felt somewhat too late that he had made a mistake, and quickly endeavoured to change the subject. "Just now," said he, "it is a question of dry land. You have deigned to promise me that you will visit my domain of Mansourah. I am in hopes of being able to show you the whole of Lower Egypt. In four days' time these gentlemen are bound to embark for Thebes and Phile, whilst you yourselves, if I have understood right, will shortly follow in the same direction. There is no time to be lost; suppose we start to-morrow morning?"

Mr. Longman said yes, the English ladies did not say no; whilst as far as we were concerned, it is easy to be imagined that we were only too glad to commence our investigation of practical agriculture in such pleasant society.

CHAPTER XII.

It was not Ahmed who awoke us next morning he sent his servant to our hotel an hour before the departure of the first train for Lower Egypt. I concluded, but without jealousy, that he had placed himself at the disposal of Miss Grace and the Longmans. Whilst we were putting the finishing touch to our baggage, a messenger from Èram-Bey brought us a paper, officially signed, forbidding the station-masters to take our money. At the same time the telegraph gave notice to the prefets, sous-prefets and governors, to offer their services whereso-ever we required them. Surely oriental hospitality is shown with no niggard hand, and those whom we treat as barbarians generously perform the honours of their country.

Arrived at the station, there was no Ahmed. We waited, the hour approached, I sent the servant to Shepherd's Hotel; at last, just one minute before the whistle blew, we perceived our dilatory friend approaching, looking miserable, and alone.

"I was sure," said he, "I dreamt it last night—she would not come."

"What reason did they give you?"

"None whatever! At least, a very bad one. Some letters to write for to-morrow's post. How could I believe it? The fact is, she was afraid to appear in

public with a man of my colour. She was not aware that God, when he made man, took up the dust spread over the surface of the world, so that the east, the west, the north, and the south should be moulded and mixed into one handful of mud."

"Why do you, who swear by their conduct of yesterday, impute a bad motive to them to-day?"

"Why? Because I am too angry to be just. You are right; it is just possible that Mr. Longman has given me a valid excuse, and that they will meet us this evening as they promised me; but I am enraged at leaving without seeing them. I heard them through the door, and they did not even move from their rooms all the time I was there."

"Listen, the fact is, at eight o'clock in the morning the ladies of our country are not in the habit of receiving visitors."

"I—I am not . . . ."

"All this goes for nothing. Why do you suppose that these English people will not take the train this evening as they have promised you?"

"I suppose it, because I fear it."

"Well, I will go bail for their loyalty; and I affirm that, if they had given up this expedition, they would have owned it then and there. Now, since it becomes a question of seven or eight hours later, you would have done better to have waited, with or without us."

He answered, firmly, "As far as that goes, certainly not; you were my guests even before you

touched Egyptian soil, and I am not the man to leave you for casual acquaintances. I ought to show you my country, in order that you may make it known to Europe and to itself; there is no pleasure, caprice, or heart-felt interest that should take precedence of such a duty. Let us talk of you, of your object, of the audience that his Highness granted you yesterday, of the questions that he propounded to you. The Viceroy is a great agriculturist, not only from the extent of his possessions, that he would do well to look after, but also from taste and interest. Unfortunately, he can neither see nor act by himself, the result of which is, that, notwithstanding all his calculations, he is the worst served, and the worst robbed of princes. You will probably tell me that there is a certain grandeur in permitting oneself to be thus robbed, and that to Mussulman sovereigns this grandeur has ever been held sacred; but, as in the end there is no sort of filching that does not eventually fall upon us, the subjects are naturally interested in their masters' affairs."

It was easy for us to perceive a certain covert and unusual harshness in his discourse, which was quite a new feature. It was quite evident that it arose from his disappointment in connection with Miss Grace's visit. Without a moment's loss of time, I therefore explained to him my programme, and I submitted with good grace to Ahmed's bad humour. He soon recommenced in the same train.

"Yes," said he, "labour is deficient; but the length of the explanation of the causes of this misfortune, rather than the difficulty of it, prevents me from entering fully upon the subject. Public ignorance, the ignoring of all primary hygienical elements, the bad supply, the almost total absence of proper medical care, exhaust the nation from its very source. A population that loses regularly three children out of every five, can hardly thrive, except by a miracle. The evil that I bring to your notice is of ancient date, I know, but it is not eternal or lasting. The prince has endeavoured to remedy it as well as he can since his accession. Alas! what difference can a reign of five years make in the life of poor old Egypt? Accumulated misery is not swept away with a dash of the pen, no more than one could sweep away the Pyramids with a broom."

"Labour is wanting, I have already said, because the idiotic luxury of our towns nurtures and encourages a multitude of sluggards."

"Labour is wanting, because from time immemorial Egyptian despots have wasted human life. Those works that command the admiration of travellers have cost the lives of thirty thousand men, ten or fifteen thousand women, without counting the children that these victims of labour might have produced. The uncertainty of all our emoluments, and, above all, that of life, has more than once occasioned large emigrations. The reverse of the picture

will some day appear, I have no doubt; I await it. So soon as we can prove that man has greater freedom here, is less taxed, and happier than in other Mussulman states, reinforcements will come to us from Africa and Asia. Whilst of Christian Europe this is what I would ask of her, if it were possible that she could agree with us; she cannot give us peasants, the Fellah alone is strong enough and patient enough to cultivate our soil and stand our climate; but we lack inspectors and sub-inspectors, who would direct our rural improvements. Europe could send some hundreds with great profit to us. We want workmen of every kind, from those who construct and repair machinery, to the simple navvy. You will perceive that such an importation from Europe would at once relieve the Fellah from imposed labour, which annoys and crushes him, with but little profit, and indirectly very largely assist personal agriculture. Railways, roads, harbours, canals, and public works, should be ceded to European labourers, who produce more and in less time than we can. If the Fellah was left uninterrupted to the culture of his field, if the power of foreign manual labour well-applied would save the peasant from being torn away from his homestead upon any pretext whatever, the returns of the soil would increase to such a degree that the largest salaries of our European co-helpers would not in the least affect the Budget. Do you wish to ascertain if the men of your country would or could work beneath an

Egyptian sky! The experiment, thank God! has been already made on a very large scale. No sooner did his Highness abolish compulsory labour in the Isthmus of Suez than your engineers had but to make a sign when fifteen thousand Greek, Dalmatian, Montenegrin, Maltese, Italian, German, and even French workmen, were collected upon the spot; they live in good health, almost in happiness, upon that wretched sand where my father found his grave. Fifteen thousand European workmen, it is only the half of what is wanted, be it a good year or a bad one, requisite to keep up our useful public works. The difficulty, or rather the impossibilty, will be to keep them here when the isthmus is cut through; so much the worse for you and for us, for Europe would profit largely by colonising a country that is only six days' journey from Marseilles. People of sense who go to America to seek their fortunes remain there, because they can found a family in that country. Those who labour here for subsistence will perforce return to Europe; you will once more benefit by their labours. It is a pleasant dream; let us think no more of it."

"Why not?"

"Because Egypt is separated from Europe by an ancient and unjustifiable rule, but as immoveable as the great wall of China, in virtue of certain diplomatic conventions which custom and the most palpable abuse of the law have singularly falsified, by which all Europeans landing in Egypt become

masters. They import with them the laws of their country, not for the purpose of respecting them, would it were so, but for the express purpose of violating ours. They recognise neither the Government, the Adminstration, nor the Magisterial laws of Egypt; they only know their consul. If he happens to fall foul with one of his countrymen or a native of the soil, it is his consul who settles the matter, to the exclusion of the local judges.

"I have nothing to say against the consuls; I will even admit, in order to please you, that the official representatives of Europe are all perfect saints. Will you in return, allow that gods would not be too perfect to accomplish so very delicate a task? You must be acquainted with the language of the country, you must be rich enough, or disinterested enough to withstand the temptation of bribery, no matter whence it comes; you must, in fact, know how to divide yourself, as it were, upon many occasions, in order to play the lawyer and the judge. If France, to speak of a country that you know best, is possessed of men formed after such a model, she has never sent us more than two or three during the last thirty years.

"After this, do not forget that there are nearly twenty foreign consulats in this unfortunate Egypt, nearly twenty states in the State, nearly twenty petty princes, who threaten, upon the least provocation, to break with us. Consider that a brawl, a row, a scandal, or the stab of a knife, may any

day rouse a conflict between the rights of our sovereign the Khedive, and the pretended rights of our visitors; you can easily understand why we refuse to admit a force of 30,000 Europeans, strong, violent, and undisciplined, as are the greater portion of the workmen. However great our desire may be to avail ourselves of your services, the instinct of self-preservation speaks even louder still."

"One moment, my dear friend! If your laws were so excellent, and your magistrates so irreproachable, we should never have taken the many precautions that offends your patriotism. When an Englishman establishes himself in France, or a Frenchman in England, he accepts, without hesitation, the legal code of the country. It is not that the manners and customs of our neighbours are of more value than our own. Frenchmen, for example, despise the tardiness of British police; whilst Englishmen can ill support the arrogance of our judges; but the two civilizations are equal, and in both countries one is equally sure of meeting with talented, upright, and independent magistrates."

"Ah! lend us your civilization, your laws, your judges even! Let Europe endeavour to supply us with a code, equal, or superior to that of Napoleon's! Let her search in her courts and tribunals a half-a-dozen Minoses and Rhadamanthuses to transplant them here! Egypt would adopt them; she would reward them magnificently enough to prevent any tempta-

tion from affecting them, even in that corrupted and corrupt centre, that sixty centuries of despotism has formed here."

"Well said. But are you certain that Europe possesses six such men too many? We have plenty; perhaps they are all employed, and people who know how to get on, only export that which is of no use to them."

"If it is so with Europe, if these infallible and incorruptible judges are so much wanted for the requirements of the nations, if you have none to spare for those whom you call savages, by what right do you assert your superiority over us?"

"Superior or not, nature has not decreed that we should supply you with justices."

"Has she permitted you to supply us with the offscourings of your society, the overplus of your prisons and galleys?"

"You do not speak rightly, Ahmed; the custom has long since been abolished in our country."

"Ah! what does it matter? I speak to the best of my ability. Speak truthfully, and think justly, that is the main object."

We had, by this time, arrived at the station of Bèna; some veiled women ran the whole length of the train selling oranges, hard-boiled eggs, and cakes; these last were something like Brittany pancakes. Ahmed purchased half-a-dozen, which he distributed amongst us, saying, "You must taste the best bread the Fellahs live upon." We

did so, it was execrable, it grated between our teeth as if the flour was made of sand; the taste was bitter, and they smelt slightly of musk. "Dear friends," said Ahmed, "the sad stuff you are now tasting is denied to the greater portion of my fellow-countrymen; they eat nothing but flour made from maize, or of the sugar-cane (*sorghum*) badly ground between two stones, and baked or boiled over a fire made of dried manure. Neither of these two sorts of flour contain sufficient nourishment for the human frame. Our wheat, even, that which you have just now been tasting, is poorer in nourishing material than any other in the world. This is sad, is it not? Well, this is not all. Our wheat, the healthiest in appearance, contains something acid and bad in it which will account to you for the taste and smell of the cakes you have been eating. It has even been said that our corn seeds contracted a bad taste, upon the grounds that the animals who walked upon them impregnated the ground; but I have made so many experiments, that I have at length arrived at the conclusion that our wheat is at bottom impregnated by certain glutinous and corrupt matter. Just look how our wheat contains acids," said he, taking a piece of bluish paper from his pocket and applying it to the piece of bread I had been eating. "Do you perceive it reddens the colour of the litmus paper? Can you not comprehend why it follows that our wheat is so much depreciated in European markets? What I am astonished at, is, that it is quoted as high as it is."

"It is, then, the soil of Egypt that is to blame, and were one to add a certain amount of phosphates." . . .

"The trial is worth the trouble, but I am persuaded, *à priori*, that what God does, is done for the best; and that whatever is evil springs from man. If the Romans saw no difference between our wheat and that of the two Sicilies, which is perfection, it is clearly evident that eighteen hundred years ago, the one was of as great value as the other. Since then ignorance and poverty have destroyed our agriculture, and everything has degenerated. The Fellahs reap continual crops from one spot without knowing that the earth should have occasional rests by altering the crops. These unfortunate people have sold the best of the grain, and kept the worst for seed; does it require any further explanation to account for the degeneracy of our grain? Is not a remedy clearly pointed out? A rotation of crops, and, above all, fresh seed. I have tried the grain of all countries, and after six years' experience, I find that that of Medèah contains glutinous matter to the extent of 18 in the 100, and could be cultivated almost indefinitely, since during these last six years it has scarcely degenerated at all; but, for those, who, like me, are in trade with Europe, more profit will be found in the grain from Polonia or Russia, which must be renewed yearly. The grain which I sell in Marseilles is *bonâ fide* Russian, and my agent exchanges it, sack for sack, against the arrivals from Odessa."

"Do you grow Russian wheat without any other top-dressing than the mud from the Nile?"

"Ah! pardon me, I have been young like others, and I also thought that Egyptian soil required no manuring or strengthening. But I brought back with me, from your country, the practical and profound elements of agriculture, which ordains the strengthening of the soil to enable one to reap its largest productions. I am not the only one of this opinion. Industrial agriculture, and more particularly that of the sugar-cane, has taught even the most ignorant amongst us, that the earth is not inexhaustible, and that one must nourish the nurse for fear of destroying her. No one is as yet clear upon the point as to whether sewage or animal excreta is the best sort of manure; the former is forbidden to us by our religion, and the latter we use for firing, in consequence of the want of wood. Are you aware that British India still uses the same fuel, and that I have even made them try it in certain parts of France? Our Fellahs have thought to obtain a sufficient supply of manure, from a source which assuredly destroys sixty per cent. of the good it does. I mean pigeon's manure. Just look there to the right, you will perceive something like large white towers; those are pigeon houses belonging to a friend of mine. I have made a statistical calculation on this subject. Twenty thousand pigeons find a home there; their manure averages about four purses per annum, or about a little more than twenty-

five louis. To this add, if you like, the sale of the pigeons, who breed from the spring to the autumn. In a good season about five hundred per diem are hatched, but the flesh is so common, and we get so soon tired of it, that a bushel of young pigeons is hardly worth a kilogramme of good beef. This is absolutely the whole benefit derived from a numerous colony, who ravage the plains all day with the beak. Last year I said to the proprietor, 'Do you happen to know how much these cost you, these twenty thousand pigeons?' 'No, who on earth could tell?' 'How much do you think they eat altogether?' 'A few *ardebs* per diem, more or less; five or six at the outside. Let us say five, in order not to exaggerate.' 'Why, you unfortunate man, do you not see that at the end of the year these pigeons will have consumed 3,000 hectolitres of grain, representing a sum of 30,000 francs, which you lose.' 'But,' said he, 'my pigeons feed upon my neighbours' corn as well.' 'And, you stupid, do not your neighbours' feed upon yours?' That, gentlemen, is the simple theory of the pigeons. You understand clearly why my friends and I have no pigeons on the plains of Mansourah. The only manure that I employ is furnished by my horses, oxen, sheep, and goats. We do not, nevertheless, want for firing. Thank God, the cotton-tree stems furnish us with capital faggots, by hundreds of thousands; and upon twelve hectares of dry soil, I have planted a little forest, which is coming on nicely."

"A forest in the Delta?"

"Only an embryo one, simply to show what care and industry can produce. You must learn that this country, from the cataract of Assoam down to the mouths of the Nile, would grow capital timber in a short time, if people would only take the trouble, and above all not cut down the best part of it. It would, perhaps, be more hurtful than useful to plant with wood those plains that are now producing bread, oil, sugar, and cotton; but our worst land, and our deserts themselves, would soon be covered with strong forest vegetation, were they but watered and cultivated. When we have controlled the waters of the Nile, a time, I trust, not far distant, the deserts of sand that surround us will be covered with forests, and our worst land will be turned into pasturage for cattle, enough to produce meat for European markets. The fertile portions will be reserved for cereal and above all industrial agriculture. The forest will require but little care, one man to every 100 hectares; the flocks will need but little looking after. In Australia one man takes charge of a thousand head of large cattle. This would leave two thirds of the population for agricultural purposes, and the 'Fellah,' if God willed that things should prosper under his hand, would, by the end of the century, become the greatest producer in the world."

"Nothing short of that? How you go on, my dear Ahmed! I can see very well upon whom you

rely to guarantee to your countrymen the free use of their arms. But you have spoken of capitalists; where, I beg of you to tell me, will Egypt find them? You yourself have been lucky enough at the outset to obtain fifty thousand francs from the pocket of Saïd Pacha, is it to be imagined that your disciples will have the same luck? The finances of the Egyptian Government are, I will not say unhealthy, but at any rate embarrassed, and the treasury hardly appears in a condition to offer assistance to private undertakings."

"One moment! It is but too true that capitalists like labour, are wanting, and for the same cause. A uniform vice and insecurity has weighed for centuries upon our persons and our goods. The labouring population are never certain that they may not be impressed for statute labour, and the large proprietor is never certain when his workmen may be taken away from him. The same uncertainty depreciates riches that are hereditary riches, as those that are acquired. No one can tell that to-morrow taxation may not remove every penny he possesses. The requirements of power are frightful; above all, since your agents, backed up by your consuls, draw incessantly upon a small territory, unprotected and unarmed. The whole method of obtaining money by the Government is a wrong one. When they want six millions, they apply to the Moudirs, who give it, only to get it again from the *Cheiks-el-beled*, who in their turn come down upon the people for it.

Naturally, the first lend their capital at usury, and the same method goes on to the end of the chapter. The five franc piece that is torn from the hands of the Fellah, passes from hand to hand, and if it represent ten sous by the time it reaches his Highness, it is a perfect miracle. By an identical phenomena, though reversed, when his Highness gives a five franc piece to benefit the Fellah, by the time it reaches its destination it is represented by ten sous. Do not laugh! it was once the same in France, in the days of the Great King; and the large farmers in every country do nothing else. We read in Ammianus Marcellinus, that in older days the Fellahs looked upon it as a point of honour to resist until the bastinado put an end to their efforts. The custom still prevails, as in former times, and gold is continually hidden in holes in the ground; thus Egypt is literally paved with it, for often the possessor dies without leaving any description of the spot where his treasure lies hid. It is said that the American war and the cotton crisis put a million and a half into our pockets; I should be puzzled to tell you where it is all gone; what is however evident, is, that it has not improved the position of the Fellah; each one fears to tell of his gains, if he has any, for fear of taxation. Since the days of Ismael Pacha, we have never been governed by so mild a prince as now sits upon the throne; the Fellah has never been so lightly treated in the shape of statute labour; he is only called upon to give up one month and a half in the year for the

benefit of public works; he can even buy himself off at a fixed price; but it is a guarantee that we want, and this guarantee, nothing but a European judicature could give to us. We do not possess that third power, so well described, so nobly represented by Montesquieu, the Magistrature. Help us! Save us! The day following the one when Europe shall have lent us a judiciary power, the treasures of the earth will well up from its bosom to encourage agriculture and industry. If we have not a sufficiency, Europe will lend us some, at a reasonable rate of interest, because we shall, for the first time, offer for her consideration terms based upon a solid hypothesis. Your capitalists will here find investments producing seven or eight per cent., upon undeniable security, and our agriculture is so well favoured by the Almighty as to permit of such interests being paid without the country suffering from it. Do you understand me?"

"Perfectly; but it seems to me, Ahmed, that your patriotism has suddenly changed its tone. A short time ago you could not find words sufficient to vent maledictions upon Europe, and here you are asking her to become a mother to you! Old Egypt, ten thousand years old and more, is desirous of going to school again. Is it to us, the bandits, the destroyers of Alexandria, that you come for help?"

"If I appear inconsistent, it is because you have either not heard me aright, or misapprehended me What I reproach Europe for is, that for one good

man she sends us twenty swindlers. You are indispensable to us, and we are of use to you. Egypt rendered you signal services between the years 1862 and 1866 ; to-day she implores the collective patronage of the civilized powers, and soon I hope to see her their rival in civilization, with but little assistance. Heaven has granted us a prince intelligent enough to spontaneously abdicate his highest prerogatives in favour of a foreign magistracy. To so much good will, would you dare to answer, No? You would not. Shall Egypt remain for ever divided between an hereditary master and seventeen officials in embroidered coats ? "

The discussion was not finished when the train stopped upon the banks of the Nile, before a station full of bustle, and a fair-sized town. It was Mansourah, that the Prince de Joinville called Massoure ; it was the prison of good king Saint Louis ; it is also at present an enormous cotton depôt ; we could perceive in the distance a market encumbered with enormous masses of that snowy vegetation ; we could see, moving along, boats piled half mast high with enormous cotton bales.

Ahmed's people and horses awaited us before the station. What horses ! four magnificent Arab stallions of the pure Medjed race, harnessed after the old method, that is to say, covered with velvet and gold.

Dare I own it ? we regretted the conveyances of Cairo ; those noble animals inspired us with admira-

tion, but tempered with respect for the safety of our limbs. The best horseman amongst us, above all things, feared the asses, for we had been told that Egyptian animals had been taught a certain trick, which was sure to unseat any stranger, to a certainity—they started off, we were told, at full gallop, and after going some hundred yards, stopped dead short, their fore-feet stuck out in front, and their heads lowered, shooting their riders over their heads. Ahmed guessed our thoughts, and said—

"I will go in front of you at a walk, and you will only have to follow me. Besides, as roads here are not over good, each animal is accompanied by his groom; the true Arabian horse possesses the docility of a child—he loves those who love him. If you come to see me again next year, I trust to take you to my house by a carriage-road. In the meantime, resign yourselves to the only mode of locomotion that is available; we have quite an hour's journey."

Whilst he was persuading us to mount, his servants were packing our luggage upon two enormous camels, who grinned like perfect devils, uttering strange cries. Curious brutes, these camels; we read of their docility, patience, usefulness, and all the rest of it, but never a word of their vices. They are grumblers, quarrelsome, stubborn, and vindictive to a degree. Five or six days before our arrival, a certain Alexandrian camel surprised a child who had teased it the day before; he caught the poor little

fellow asleep, and then and there killed him in the street. The road we followed preserved the same features as those traversed by all Egyptian travellers except in the neighbourhoods of Cairo and Alexandria. It is a path formed upon a sort of crust of black earth, and cut through, here and there, by canals, ditches, or small rivulets. Not a single bridge, but fortunately very little water, for the Nile was low. Cultivated Egypt is, to speak truly, nothing but a vast chessboard, each square of which is in its turn divided into another chessboard. Vegetation is impossible without water, and water, except by a rare phenomenon, comes but from the Nile. The Fellah knows well how to conduct these supplies of water, and should the Nile be too low to continue the supply, they still possess smaller rivers and canals, artificially supplied, which prevents a dearth of that necessitous fluid. Thanks to the industry of the inhabitants, and the sun, which is always present at all seasons, verdure is never wanting in the lower portion of the country. We were advancing through a smiling plain, although the trees for the most part were destitute of leaves. I, nevertheless, asked myself the question, if we had not taken a useless journey, for all the harvest seemed to have been gathered up, and as to seeing green fields in January, it is a thing one can see in France. I was reflecting upon this, and the uninteresting landscape, when Ahmed pointed with his finger to a sort of village, saying—

"We have arrived; this is Kouzbarrah."

There is not a villa nor a cottage in the department of Seine and Marne, which had not a more imposing appearance than this residence of Kouzbarrah—in French, *coriandre*, for the palace of the master takes its name from the plant which it deposed. Imagine to yourself a group of red and white buildings, some besmeared with whitewash, others modestly exhibiting red brick sides. It was in vain that a grand *cortège* composed of a hundred Fellahs or more, rushed out to welcome Ahmed and to kiss the hem of his garment. We felt like three Parisians, who, having been invited to a set dinner, find on their arrival there is only pot-luck.

Our opinion, however, was soon changed upon seeing the habitation itself. We were asked to descend before an elegant porch, which was the only entrance to the *Kazr*, or château. A large, and even very large, square tower composed the whole of this cheerless looking residence. Not a single window looked upon the surrounding country; nothing but white walls, naked and continuous, seemed to offer a residence fit to realise the wildest dreams of a solitary misanthrope. In the interior of a gravelled court-yard, a small fountain played, and some pretty orange trees covered with mandarins were placed around it. A sort of verandah, supported by red and white pillars, ran round the whole court. The chambers received light through the windows looking on to this court. Roses, jasmines, and other creepers trailed up the pillars of the verandah.

We partook of coffee and chibouques under the verandah, seated upon numerous cushions. Dinner soon followed, a veritable Arabian feast, the principal feature of which was a lamb roasted whole. Exquisite meat, although a little too much cooked; but I doubt very much if a French or English joint could have been so easily dissevered with one's fingers. We dined sumptuously; Ahmed ever faithful to the laws of the Rhamadan, sustained his hunger by tightening his waist-belt; but he took great care of us, and that famous wine of Mansourah was not neglected. After the second cup of coffee, and the chibouques which followed it, humanity suggested that we should retire to rest. Ahmed, no doubt from politeness, refused to do so, being anxious to show us his garden, his farm, and his stable. I declared that I was positively dying of fatigue, and that we would not leave the house until the arrival of our English friends.

"Ah! how do you expect me to sleep, my friends?" he exclaimed.

Dulocle answered, "Go to sleep, my dear Ahmed; if it be but for the sake of dreaming."

Our apartments were furnished in the usual Oriental style, the beds were made up upon divans somewhat hard to be sure, but we were accustomed to it. Two sheets of white silk were covered by two or three Cashmere shawls, there was a silver basin with a jug of the same material, with half-a-dozen soft towels embroidered in gold with the name of Ahmed.

The honest fellow made excuses for receiving us so badly. "The fact is," said he, "everything decent-looking in the house I have had placed in the ladies' chambers."

"Parbleu! my dear fellow, you inspire me with a violent desire to see Miss Grace's room. What magnificence have you imagined for her, if you find us badly quartered."

"My people did what they could; the time was short, and I was not myself upon the spot; but come and see."

He introduced me into a room where the richest, the happiest, and the most envied of women would have found nothing to find fault with. The ceiling and walls had disappeared, it was nothing but a blue and yellow tent, but formed of a blue and yellow tint that the manufactories of Lyons have been hitherto unable to procure from the Chinese. The thick and heavy masses of silk hung naturally in large folds; a door embroidered with a thousand figures fell behind us; daylight entered through a large aperture covered with an immense grating of sculptured ivory. I walked as if in a dream; three thick Smyrna carpets, laid one upon the other, seemed to spring under one's feet. Over a Pekin lacquered bed, white muslin covered with blue, green, and rose coloured birds, were spread and hung right and left, behind a high satin screen where Flora and the Fawn of the extreme East were represented in coral, jade, amber, and lapis-lazuli. A toilet set in

old china covered an enamelled table, and were it necessary to enumerate all the magnificent knick-knacks in ivory, lacquer-work, ebony, bronze, and marquetry with which the hospitality of Ahmed had strewed the apartment, it would require the services of an appraiser.

Ahmed timidly inquired, if Miss Grace would not find these preparations all too unworthy of her. I laughed in his face by way of answer, and sent him off to bed, when he dragged me off to his apartment, which was of monastic simplicity, in order to give me an insight to his ledger, for the expenditure and receipts of Kouzbarrah were carefully kept by double entry.

"No," said I, "no business until we come to the point."

"It is just because we are alone that I wish to show you some accounts. Does one talk of money before ladies? And Miss Grace, good God! what would she think, were I to vaunt my riches before her, as if it was my intention to dazzle or purchase her."

"I don't know that. The young lady is a daughter of a great and eminently practical people."

"No! a being so fresh, so pure, so spotless . . . . "

"Do not take her part; no one accuses her! But flowers, which are fresh, pure, and spotless like herself, do not fear a handful of earth around their roots. Nevertheless, let us see this ledger, and if you wish the contents to remain a secret, you may count upon my discretion."

It was impossible to read his register, for the very good reason that it was written in Arabic, but the little which he translated to me deeply interested me. What shall I say of an agricultural speculation where the receipts of a thousand *feddans*, or four hundred and twenty hectares, produced, in the year 1864, the amount of a million of francs! "We are," said Ahmed, "the purveyors of the stranger, we must hold ourselves in readiness to satisfy all their wants, whatever they may be; and I give as much elasticity as possible to my improvements. My little forest, my vine, trained and looked after, following the principles of Dr. Guyot, my olive-trees, my mulberry-trees, and even my orchard, occupy land of little value, bought at a good price, and added to, rather than incorporated with, my farm, whilst the farm proper, I take care, always produces cotton, flax, wheat, and beans or tobacco, according to the demand of such articles for the European market. Would you believe it, that for several centuries Egypt has bought her tobacco from Syria, or Turkey in Europe, because she wishes to have it moderately good? Our Fellahs do not cultivate, reap, or smoke anything except a certain sort of hay, without strength and without perfume. Why? Because they put into the ground, absolutely destitute of potass, bad seed, which arises from their permitting the plant to run to seed and the leaves to dry upon the ground. I sow seed from Havanna upon cotton ground which is not wanting

in potass, thank God! I dry each leaf most carefully in the shade, under well ventilated sheds, and I obtain a quality equal or superior to the much vaunted products of Djébél. Let the Fellahs imitate my example, and they will succeed, like me."

He entertained me for some time with divers descriptions of his undertakings, and the profits. He ceased not to speak or I to listen, but a formidable snoring from some unknown place, reminded me that I had determined to send my host to bed. I therefore stopped him politely upon his first attempt to describe his stock, and quietly closing the door, I retired to rest.

CHAPTER XIII.

It was ten o'clock at night before Miss Grace and the Longmans, faithful to their promise, like true English people, arrived in sight of Kouzbarrah. Ahmed had gone out to meet them, we remained in the house to correct and write up our journals. A servant informed us by signs that the *cortège* was in sight, and we made but two bounds from the staircase of the selamlik to the terrace.

It would really have been a great pity to miss such a sight. The cavalcade, about a quarter of a mile distant from us, glided along over the darkening plain like a long serpent of fire. Eight men on

foot, clothed in white cotton, preceded, went on either side, and followed the mounted persons, waving their torches of resinous wood in the air; others carried lanterns which they waved in the air. Ahmed had placed Miss Grace and the Longmans, husband and wife, upon Arabian horses, Miss Longman upon a magnificent ass from Hedjaz; a dozen servants upon donkeys, horses, or dromedaries, with various torches, and carrying fuel for supplying them, advanced slowly upon the narrow path which was terminated by Kouzbarrah. All at once, when they had reached a spot where the road widened, the horses drew up in a line, and, at a given signal, started off at a gallop towards us. Miss Longman's animal, after the manner of asses, was desirous of following, this she endeavoured to prevent by pulling at the reins, and calling out loudly. A dozen servants rushed to her assistance, the torches and lanterns were upset, the animals of the rear guard took fright and made off in all directions, one camel threw himself upon the ground with his neck stretched out, another sat upon his haunches and refused to move; and several of the torch-bearers, in their haste to catch up the horses, fell into a ditch, one upon the other, making an omelette of their lanterns and torches.

Notwithstanding all this, the court-yard became illuminated by some invisible agency, and when Ahmed and Miss Grace, making a dead heat of it, bounded the first into the circle of light, the young

Englishwoman might well have thought herself the princess and he the prince in a Christmas fairy scene. The arrivals kept going on for another quarter of an hour, amongst many upsets, great cries, and a good deal of laughter. The Fellahs are great children, the least thing amuses them. Grace smiled, she made her ass caracole round the court-yard as if she were in a riding school; whilst we, being above, took great delight in a sight where movement, confusion, and varied colours, although not inharmonious, were blended all together; and we decided to remain where we were. At length, when Miss Longman had alighted from her ass, and the luggage had been distributed in the various apartments; when the ladies had repaired the disorder of their dresses, and rushed from one room to another—that is to say, from ecstasy to ecstasy—a deep toned gong announced that supper was ready, and we repaired to the selamlik, around a veritable European table.

There was nothing wanting, neither chairs, nor napkins, nor silver, nor wines prohibited by the law of Mahomet. The claret of château Lafitte and Madame Clicquot's champagne had already made a voyage to India in a French steamer; perhaps, indeed, they had returned by way of that excellent service now established in Japan, numbering at least two hundred vessels. The ragouts alone were native dishes, but no one complained, and Miss Grace in particular gave evidence of an appetite

very flattering to Arabian cookery. When the sweets arrived everybody was gay, and only those who drank water were intoxicated. Never had Miss Grace shown Ahmed so bright a phase in her character; that cordial *laissez aller* that one loves and admires so much in young English girls, when nothing prevents, and when they dare to appear in their true characters, was now fully exhibited. She prattled on every side without weighing her words, without fearing the answers, with that delightful *petit aplomb* of a well-bred girl who feels quite at home. She conversed about the road, the Nile, the Fellahs—of her room, scarce glanced at, but which she already called "My museum!"—of that magnificent fiery Arab that had carried her like the horse in the ballad, and which she looked forward to seeing again when she woke next morning.

"He is yours, mademoiselle," said Ahmed.

"I accept him . . . . for forty-eight hours."

"Why not for ever?"

"Because, my dear Monsieur Ahmed, I do not, alas! possess a stable."

"Accept of my stable also."

"And the house, also, is it not so? and the land also? and the proprietor, also, with a chain round his neck like a slave?"

"Oh, yes, mademoiselle; a hundred times, yes."

"Ah! your politeness is quite Spanish, and I will not take you at your word; but, in all sincerity, Monsieur Ahmed, I wet my lips to your good health."

"Whilst I swear to you, mademoiselle, that this poor house, were it to last for a hundred years, will preserve to the last day the perfume of your presence."

"Oh, imprudent man!" this simple phrase provoked seven or eight different toasts, in which each of us endeavoured to ape the Oriental style. It was a perfect shower of jasmines, honeysuckles, and roses, and everybody laughed so much and so heartily, that Ahmed commenced from contagion to laugh himself, without knowing what about; his mouth was a flower, composed of thirty-two teeth, which opened to the sun of our gaiety . . . always Arabian style.

Had we had a piano, I feel certain we should have danced until morning. The piano was wanting. Even lovers themselves do not always remember everything. This inadvertence of Ahmed's, that, believe me, I was not sorry for, saved us from a long night. We separated towards one o'clock, with hearty shakes of the hand; and I remarked that Ahmed did not withdraw his hand so quickly, notwithstanding the ancient custom of Egypt.

We were up early, and the general inspection commenced. The stables and the offices seemed to us somewhat rude. The horses, cows, oxen, and sheep were more (properly speaking) sheltered than housed: four walls of unbaked brick, covered with a straw thatch, mangers of wood, and sand for litter; but everything in order, clean, and well

looked after; the proudest equine races of Egypt require no more. Ahmed showed us fifteen horses and mares without a blemish; the remainder were out at grass. It would have been difficult, I imagine, to meet with finer specimens of Arabian horses. What astonished us most was the rarity of these animals in the country. Ahmed told me their history without bothering us with genealogies.

He had procured, with a great deal of difficulty, two mares from Nedjed; from these two, in nine year's time, had sprung the present stock he possessed.

"My sole merit," said he, "is to have done away with any faulty animals. I have not much faith in mixing the breeds in a climate like ours; but a good selection I deemed indispensable. It is by following this system that I have been enabled to reproduce our perfect breed of small cattle, such as those we admire so much on our old monuments. Ten years ago small cattle were as plentiful in Egypt as they are now scarce. I travelled a great deal, and whenever I came across a beast that suited me, I bought it without bargaining, and thus I raised the beasts I am about to show you."

He showed us more than fifty in one yard—bulls, cows, heifers, and calves, and all these were perfect models. The old Egyptian breed is not remarkable for its size, strength, or fatness; it is on the other hand, well proportioned, in order to supply either milk, food, or labour, as the case may require. The

extremities are fine, the back straight, the head beautifully formed, and the physiognomy soft and intelligent. These animals differed very much from some others that Ahmed had bought simply for the sake of fattening and re-selling: these were full of deformities. We also saw some white asses of Hedjaz, looking well and full of health. Good specimens of this race fetch 100 louis, and I imagine they are not too dear. The dairy was of recent date, and therefore was but little noticed. What, however, delighted Miss Grace and the other young ladies most was, when our host took us into an enormous aviary, where flamingoes, herons, pelicans, swans, and fifty different sorts of wild duck, lived harmoniously together, in a sort of artificial water-cage.

"I don't know yet," said he, "whether this establishment, only commenced three months ago, will turn out one of pleasure or profit. Our ancestors used to cultivate all these species, that is certain; but what for I am unable to say. Close to this, on the Menzaleh Lake, all these birds are to be found. They catch them there in nets. They even get into the midst of a flock, by covering their faces with a pumpkin, and tie them by their legs, like one ties a bouquet, with a bit of string."

Whilst he was giving us these details, two young Fellahs approached, carrying the birds' breakfasts in a couple of baskets.

"Monsieur Ahmed," asked Miss Grace, "how is

it that a man so just and good as you are, can make poor little children work? I saw about fifty of them round the house this morning. Did you not abuse us for so doing in our manufactories?"

"Certainly, mademoiselle, it is a detestable practice. To imprison poor little things in an unhealthy quarter, where ignorance, vice, and all sorts of bad qualities are engrafted, is a crime of *lèse*-humanity; but just look for one moment at these children. Do they look miserable or badly fed? They also know how to read. I have seventy here, and thirty at Keneh, in Upper Egypt. Their parents entrust them to me, and I am endeavouring to form out of them a useful and well taught set of labourers, who will in their turn teach others, and become, God willing, a blessing to their country. I feed them, clothe them, and teach them: all I ask in return is, that they use their little arms. Should I succeed, perhaps Government, struck with the results, will found depôts like this, which will benefit my country."

From thence we passed into a lower yard, where we saw Cochin China fowls as big as turkeys. Carrier pigeons flew about, without danger to the crops, in this aviary; and several couples of golden pheasants coquetted in a separate partition. Miss Grace lost none of these things, and seemed interested in them all.

"This is the promised land," said she; "I am sure, Monsieur Ahmed, that you are more often here than at your palace in old Cairo."

"I come often, but I seldom stop."

"Why is that?"

"Because I am alone here."

"But your mother and sister?"

"There is no harem for them here."

"You should make one."

"Unfortunately, it is more than probable that I shall die an old bachelor."

How obligingly one is resigned to one's fate. He proceeded—

"I will not have an Arab girl, and a European girl would never have me, because you do not know us. You judge us from the witness of a few fanatical authors, or mad travellers. The Mussulman believes like the Christian, in an all-powerful God, who has created all things; he believes in the immortality of the soul, in the resurrection of the body, and in the recompenses and punishments of a future existence. He believes, with the Calvinists, in justification by faith, not by works; and in predestination. He believes in the revealed books, which are the Koran, the Pentateuch, the Psalms of David, and the books of the Evangelists. All our doctors reverence Jesus Christ as the greatest prophet that preceded Mahomet, as the Messiah of nations and the Spirit of God. How do yours speak of Mahomet? You accuse us of intolerance; but there is not a Christian of any persuasion who does not exercise his religion in open day in every Mussulman country."

A discussion ensued amongst the four English

people and the champion of Islam. This debate, hot although not angry, animated our long walk across the fields, for we were being taken on foot towards a place called "*Qualb*," in French, "*Cœur*." This Cœur was nothing else but a twenty-four horse-power machine, put upon the bank of a good-sized canal. It was used for irrigating the land, and did so, at what seemed to us a very reasonable price; the cubic mètre of water costing about ten centimes. When not employed in irrigation, the machine racked the cotton, ground the wheat, and such like things. Ahmed had had it made in the forges of the Mediterranean, after a plan of his own; but unfortunately, whenever it got out of order, people were obliged to come from Alexandria, and even Marseilles, to repair it.

The canal is bordered with well-grown poplars, that seem as if they were thriving in Holland, or, at any rate in Italy. Not far from this we saw a large field promising well. Almonds, peaches, and a few prune trees, were in flower, and the apricots were in bud. Ahmed explained to us how he endeavoured to overcome the fatality which degenerates all the fruits of Egypt.

"It is very probable," said he, "that the apricot, the peach, the cherry, and other fruits, owe their perfection to your climate, and also to your gardeners. The East lent you some wild stock, scarcely fit for food; you have done wonders with them. No sooner does the tree, improved by you, return to its original

country, than it remembers what it formerly was; we cry out that it degenerates, whereas the real truth is, it has but returned to its pristine state. This is the reason that all our fruits, with the exception of the date and the orange, are small, and of mediocre flavour. Our vegetables partake of the same evil; we gather tomatoes of the size of nuts, and carrots no bigger than salsify roots. What can be done against a law which Nature obstinately maintains? Continue as obstinately as she, that is my method; I never cease from renewing my seed and my grafts, and if my produce is inferior to yours, it at least far surpasses all the Fellah productions. I am endeavouring also to improve our unfortunate flowers. If our jasmines and mimosas defy all comparison, the roses of Fayoum, about which so much is said, are below mediocrity. I cultivate tuberoses; I endeavour to extract their perfume by means of ether, and I do not despair of introducing that pleasant labour which so enriches the department of Var."

"Is it possible," said Miss Grace, "that a single man can grasp so many things at one time?"

"Were I to consult my own interest, mademoiselle, I should confine myself to one sort of agriculture; but the prosperity of the country is dearer to me than my own, and I try everything that can create a resource for my poor fellow-countrymen. Do you see that little field, scarce an acre in extent? It will give me in six months, I trust, the solution of a great problem. I have sown there,

without regard to order, all those seeds that flourish on the plains of Buenos Ayres. Experience will tell me, if amongst the number will be found one fit to grow in Egypt. Hitherto we have never known how to encourage pasturage, that is to say, natural prairies where cattle are nourished and multiply without the intervention of man. If I succeed in this project, the poorer portions of Egypt will, in ten years' time, become a vast manufactory of flesh."

"But," said I, "if it is necessary to consecrate twenty-four hours per week to the purposes of irrigation, it is no longer possible to have pasturage; the trampling of the cattle will cut up all your meadows."

"Why? I shall make separate lots, by means of palisades, and we shall only pasture those portions that are perfectly dry. Would you like to see the material that my fences are made of? We can see from here that famous forest I mentioned to you; let us go and see it."

In a quarter of an hour we reached this seemingly improbable miracle, which the Fellahs attributed to some invisible power, or to demons, although they themselves had planted, or seen planted, every tree. By means of a simple method of irrigation, and planted upon a sand bank covered with some good soil, the trees seemed to flourish, and were in excellent health. It required but moisture and sun to create, notwithstanding the poverty of the soil, some fine trees. I had already noticed this phenomenon

in the Gironde, although not so wonderful as in this instance. Ahmed had naturally chosen those trees most likely to succeed in his country. The sycamore, the carob tree, the tamarind, the acacia seyal of the desert, the acacia arabica, and other species of acacia. The only exotic plant being the mimosa, which did not appear to regret its country or our own. When we had seen everything, the owner said to us, "Do you now believe that it is possible to convert our sands into forests? Do you comprehend that trees do not require the same amount of irrigation as sugar-cane, cotton, or other industrial plants? The most sandy portions of our soil, if you go to the depth of a mètre, have sufficient moisture for the nourishment of trees, and the dews of night are ever there to refresh the foliage. I have not yet tried the larger Australian trees, but I possess a young '*Eucalyptus*,' which I will show you after breakfast."

It was time to return; the English people were yawning, not from weariness, but from hunger.

After an excellent breakfast, we smoked in the open air under the gallery, Miss Grace acclimatising herself to the smell of Turkish tobacco, and our host gazing upon her. I was forced to interrupt this contemplation. "Were I making a mere pleasure trip," said I, "I should be glad to remain as long as you would keep me; but duty compels me to leave the most agreeable society. I am astonished at your *abadieh*, and I can easily comprehend that

Lower Egypt will become the richest country in the world, if you will only teach her. Now you must help me to leave you, for I am desirous of visiting Mansourah, Damietta, and the Eastern branch of the Nile as far as the sea." My two companions joined in chorus, the object of their voyage not being to study agriculture, but to see Egypt under every aspect.

This proposition greatly embarrassed Ahmed. He felt that our reasons were good, and had we been his only guests, no doubt he would have conducted us to the end of the world. But Miss Grace and Mr. Longman were also his guests; the Islanders found themselves comfortable where they were. Miss Grace had, laughing, said to him, "What a pleasant time we shall pass, riding those beautiful horses about your charming country." This proposal placed him in the awkward position of having to give up the woman he adored, to chaperon three bearded men.

He looked at us in a suppliant manner.

"If Mansourah would suffice your curiosity," said he, "I would accompany you every day, or I would have you taken there. You wish to descend the Nile; that is quite another thing. A voyage is not taken in a moment in this country, for you see the Viceroy himself requires four days to prepare a steamer. I possess a few boats, they are all at your service, but they are a terrible distance from here. The cleanest, and the most comfortable, awaits me at Minieh, far above Cario. I had anticipated join-

ing her, with you, by the railway of Upper Egypt, and she was to take us to my farm of Keneh. At Mansourah we shall only find bad vessels, only fit to carry merchandise ; it is also necessary to procure a dragoman, and I have not one at hand. And your beds ? your provisions ? your cook ? for you are not the sort of people to cook your own chickens. I do not blame your project, but it presents insurmountable difficulties ; and the greatest proof of your friendship will be to renounce it for the present."

Whilst speaking, a little man, plainly dressed, but clean, and evidently of some importance, entered the courtyard, saluted everyone after the Arab custom, and came and sat down beside Ahmed. He exchanged a few words with him, and then, turning to me, said, in pretty good French, " Monsieur, his Highness has thought that you might be curious to see Mansourah, Damietta, and the whole of that branch of the Nile."

" Upon my word, sir," I answered, " I have never yet believed in sorcery, but my scepticism is, I confess, somewhat rudely shaken."

He smiled modestly, and answered, " The Khedive my master, is a great prince, and wishes you well."

" I am aware of it, and I am much touched ; but how he could have foreseen ?——"

" His Highness foresees everything."

Half-a-minute before your arrival I was expressing my desire to go to Damietta, and Ahmed was regretting his inability to send me."

"We will start when it pleases you."

"Have you then a *dahabieh?*"

"Two: one for you and your friends, the other for the kitchen."

"There is even a cook?"

"The cook is the butler as well, and also the *valet de chambre.* His Highness' people have forgotten nothing; your beds are made up on the first boat, and your provisions, in order, upon the second."

"But where shall we find a dragoman?"

"I shall have the honour of filling that office for you."

"Sir, you see me stupified, confounded; the genius of hospitality, banished from all other lands, has, no doubt, taken refuge in Egypt. My good Ahmed, it remains but for you to have our goods and persons transported on board the boats."

"Ahmed can save himself the trouble, sir; the horses and asses are at the door."

"Better and better! therefore we shall be in the town in an hour?"

"About that."

"Shall we visit the curiosities?"

"The préfet awaits you for that purpose, and expects you to dinner."

"But you know time presses, and we must be at Damietta by to-morrow morning."

"We shall be there by daylight."

"If we have a fair wind."

"The wind is fair."

"It has been ordered for us!—if it is fair for us to descend, it will be foul for the return."

"We shall row back."

"Do you think so? thirty leagues!"

"The Fellahs await us; I have an order to place the whole population at your service."

Everything happened word for word, as he had said, a felucca awaited upon the left bank to conduct us on board the *dahabiehs* before the mayor's house. Hardly had we got on board than the moudir, a very fine man, made his appearance. We exchanged the usual Asiatic compliments by means of Mustapha Effendi, our inperturbable dragoman.

"Gentlemen, you are welcome."

"Sir, we thank you for our reception."

"I trust that God will grant me the means to render your journey agreeable."

"Meeting a man like you, is sufficient to render it charming."

"Your journey to Mansourah will be an epoch of my existence."

"We shall leave with you a portion of our hearts."

Whilst these polite speeches were going on, the préfet's numerous attendants awaited the conclusion of the conference. We expressed a desire to visit the prison of St. Louis, and to go through the bazaars on foot. Here we were, then, with the préfet, his vakil, and cavas, marching through the streets; and woe be to the unfortunates who got

into our way, the sticks of the cavas would soon have made their acquaintance. Everything got out of the way; the horsemen dismounted, and the shopkeepers, seated before their shops, rose at our approach. Between ourselves, I should have preferred walking by myself, and seeing the town as it really was, than to march in procession through the midst of the people. The difficulty to keep serious when one felt inclined to be otherwise, was much felt; I dared not look at Najac.

The celebrated prison of St. Louis is neither authentic nor credible; it is a sort of cellar, three parts demolished, in a dirty courtyard, on the ground floor of a common house, evidently of modern construction. They might have chosen much better; the town was not wanting in ancient and picturesque structures. It rains often enough in Lower Egypt for structures of mud to be quite useless; Mansourah, Damietta, and Rosetta are built of baked brick, of a rich red colour. Trade seems to be very brisk; we are in the centre of the cotton trade; but little doing in industrial branches. The Delta is full of the ruins of manufactories, which remind you of one of the errors of Mohammed Ali. This great man thought that the abundance of natural material, and the low price of labour, predestinated his empire to be one of manufacture; he counted without workmen, and without that great labourer of modern times, Coal.

During the American war, the high price of cotton,

and the blindness of speculators, who believed in the durability of the high prices, prepared other ruins. There were many large granaries all abandoned, and others scarcely paying their expenses. There is nothing so sad as to see great undertakings abandoned, almost as soon as they are formed, and falling into decay, although they only date from 1864. All things considered, Mansourah offers but little that is interesting, and his Excellency (for the préfets of Egypt are thus styled) was unable to keep us all night. He was really an amiable and hospitable man. When he knew that we could not accept his dinner, he ordered a search to be made in the bazaars, and dispatched on board two sheep, four turkeys, fifty chickens, one hundred pigeons, and so many eggs that it was impossible to count them. By the same order, and from excess of zeal, our equipages were doubled, and escorted us the whole night; two men on horseback followed us on the bank, ready to transmit our least order, or even to give us a helping hand.

So much goodwill was, however, of no avail, for the southerly wind faithfully performed Mustapha Effendi's promise, and at eight o'clock in the morning we were close to the harbour of Damietta. A moment before arriving, you would fancy that the town dammed up the river, and that the Nile flowed no further: there was little or no stream. A multitude of red houses, and some minerets, situated between two groves of palm-trees, constituted the

first view of Damietta. The phœnix of prevailing vegetation (Phœnix dactylifera), is neither so large nor so beautiful in Lower as in Upper Egypt : under any circumstances they produce a charming effect, and I never think of Damietta, but the thought reminds me of a girl with rosy cheeks, crowned with green palm-leaves. The harbour is in an elbow, and when one thinks to have seen the whole town, you discover an immense row of houses, whose shadows are reflected in the water.

Scarcely had our "riës" anchored our large boat, head to the stream, than the governor's vakil came on board. Telegraphic despatches always announced our arrival, and the authorities always received us like old friends. Choffey Effendi, the first who made us welcome, was educated at the Egyptian mission, like Ahmed, but a few years before him. He knows French, and he even perfected himself so well in the sciences, that he was able to give assistance to the hydrographical engineers of the isthmus, near Port Saïd. His superior, Ali-Bey, followed him shortly afterwards ; he spoke no European language ; he is a Persian, very well read, a poet, historian, naturalist, and a very talented man.

He consented, most kindly, to permit us to go about the town incognito, accompanied only by his vakil. He showed us, against the usual custom, some patents we had come to see.

Damietta is celebrated for the exportation of rice, salt provisions, and by the fanaticism of its inhabitants.

Saline matter is close at hand, as also the great fisheries of the Menzaleh Lake. This lake is a small inland sea, covering more than 200,000 hectares. The fish from the Mediterranean come to spawn in these shallow waters at all times; almost lukewarm in summer. A good fisherman, be it a good or a bad year, would take 10,000,000 or 15,000,000 kilogrammes, to the great profit of Egypt, and even of Europe. The lessee, unfortunately, is one Ynani, who is a bad fisherman, and manages his kitchen so badly, that one must turn Fellah before being able to eat it. They showed one of the establishments, where the fish are salted and packed; it was a most disgusting and infectious place. The Egyptian lakes, although they bring in, it is said, some millions to the revenue of the Viceroy, are still in a state, relatively speaking, of no value. European genius could alone make a profit, when Egypt has some settled laws, and when strangers will no longer be able to enslave her.

Here superstition is not yet dead, so far as I could judge. The Fellahs of Damietta are Mussulmen, in the same way that the Bas Bretons are Christians. In the Amr mosque, outside the town, I found an unfortunate wretch trying to squeeze himself between two pillars, where I could scarcely insert my two fists. Another, more foolish still, was rubbing his tongue against a marble pillar, which exercise is supposed to be a sovereign cure for the eyes. The tongue was bleeding pitiably: the man stopped

every moment to squeeze upon the marble the juice of a lemon. You must not believe, however, that fanaticism is carried to such an extent in Damietta as in Loretto. The Amr mosque is falling into ruins.

The inevitable procession of horses, &c., was in waiting, to take us to the governor's villa, where we were presented with the usual refreshments, Ali Bey, however, not touching anything.

Towards one o'clock the vakil put us in a boat, and took us to the Boghaz, that is to say, the mouth of the Nile. From the terrace of the Lozaretto, where the amiable governor met us by land, we could see the Mediterranean in front of us; to the right the Menzaleh Lake; in the centre, towards the town, the river, the palm-tree woods, and, here and there, the yellow patches of desert. The sun was setting when we re-entered the port. Ali Bey and Choffey Effendi shared our dinner, and I can assure you that the plates were absolutely full of compliments, and diplomatic presents that I had to refuse, almost with violence, were without number. At nine o'olock we bade adieu to all, and with a reinforcement of twelve men, we said good-night to Damietta, and started for Mansourah.

On the 11th of January, towards four o'clock, we made the station of Mansourah, where a special train awaited, to take us to Cairo. A servant of Ahmed's, who had orders to wait for me at the door, gave me the following letter:—

"DEAR FRIEND,

"I am at once the happiest and the most unfortunate of men—perhaps also the most ridiculous. Judge for yourself. They are coming to Keneh with me; you will find us there altogether. They have accepted my *dahabieh*. I shall arrange with the reïs that they had engaged. Things are going on well, is it not so? But last night, finding myself alone with Mr. Longman, who is Miss Grace's trustee, I dared to mention the subject that so affects my happiness, and after having stated the position of my affairs, I asked him if he could conscientiously plead my cause with his ward. Yes, the timid Ahmed—the lover held at a distance—pushed his audacity to this point. This is word for word what he answered me. 'I have no prejudices either against your colour or your faith, but I have too much respect for opinion to counsel Grace to an act contrary to all custom. You will obtain her hand but from her own free will. I will not, however, have it said that I placed obstacles in the way of a project so advantageous to her. English opinion would be against me, were I to prevent a portionless girl from making an eccentric, but honest marriage. Make her love you, if you can: I can assure you that at present, all she feels for you is esteem.' What can I think, my dear friend? I do not ask you what I am to do; for I shall do whatever she wishes, and I will go to the bottom of the sea, if it pleases her to take me there.

"AHMED."

At eleven o'clock we were at Cairo; Arakel informed us that our steam-boat was called the "Chibine," and that we were to leave on the morrow.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE Nile is, as it were, a world by itself; at two cables' length from the quay of Boulaq, you seem a thousand miles from Damietta, Mansourah, Cairo, and every known country; you are transported into a new scene, you live another life. The traveller, luxuriously reclining, passes on the right hand and on the left through an unpublished panorama, although old as mankind, and described a thousand times by a host of observers, commencing with Herodotus, and not even finishing with Gérard De Nerval or Maxime du Camp. You imagine that painters complete the labours of writers; it is not so; each of these two have been able to grasp but a portion of those numerous and ever-changing beauties, that every hour of the day and night reveals. A nature standing alone, petrified as it were, in imperishable monuments; a novel civilization, a gigantic future, should it please man to permit it. Here then are materials enough to occupy and satisfy the most insatiable curiosity.

We embarked upon the 12th of January at two o'clock with Ahmed and his faithful Eliacin, who

had prepared coffee and chibouks whilst we were getting on board. Before proceeding on board, we paid Ahmed a visit in old Cairo; his people confirmed the news of his departure; he had taken the railway to Minieh with the English people, and he was perhaps, even now, upon the waters of the Upper Nile.

The "Chibine" was a pretty little craft, well known for her speed. The Viceroy is the owner of many such; we counted ten or a dozen that were employed in conveying his highness's guests between Cairo and Philæ, and they do so all the winter. The accommodation was commodious and rich; each one had his cabin and his bed, for we could no longer calculate upon inns; a saloon sufficient for the accommodation of ten or twelve persons occupied the after portion of the vessel. Upon the deck a perfect *salon* had been made, furnished with arm chairs covered with silk; in fact nothing was wanting. The hold was crammed with provisions; we had a house furnished after the European fashion, and the table was supplied by the manager of the best hotel in Alexandria, at the rate of ten pounds per diem.

It is in this manner that Ismail Pacha treats even the least of his guests; he is desirous that the wants of every-day life should not, by their deficiency, detract from our amusement, or interrupt our object.

The whole crew were Egyptian, from the captain down to the cabin-boy. The engineer, like the

others, was a Fellah; he convinced us that his countrymen are quite *au fait* at the management of any of our steam-engines. An Englishman could not have done the work better. As the water is low in January, we had two pilots; one steered whilst the other stood in the chains forward, with the lead-line in his hand, with which he kept continually sounding. The current is rapid, and the channel of the river is altered nearly every day; the banks of mud and sand shift from one side to the other beneath the opaque and impenetrable waters; it is necessary, therefore, to use the utmost caution in order to avoid a danger that so seriously affects the time and liberty of the traveller, if not his life. The pilots, as we passed along, continually interrogated the peasants in the fields on either side, who called out to them to keep to the right, or that the channel was on the left; and at night there was nothing to be done but to come to anchor and wait till daylight. It was this system we pursued on board the "Chibine," and we had, thanks to these precautions, no accidents during a most agreeable voyage.

There was one point that puzzled me. When the vessel cast loose her moorings, and towing her boat astern, commenced to ascend the river, I perceived a hole in the planking of the stern, to the right of the rudder. It was but a small hole, but I could not conceive how this had been left unrepaired. The "Chibine" had come out of the arsenal, to all in-

tents and purposes, in good order for our voyage, which same voyage was to cost the Viceroy 30,000 francs. The end of a board nailed upon this unfortunate hole, would not have taken ten minutes' work, and fifty centimes of expense. Why then had this breach been left open?

Why? It is a question of no little magnitude, and more difficult to answer than would at first appear. The prosperity of Egypt, her greatness, and her future, are all wrapt up in the solution of this little problem, which contains many others. Why have so many beautiful edifices fallen into ruins in a few years? Why are the canals, destined to irrigate the fields, out of repair in every direction? Why is it said that the Nile Embankment will be destroyed before it is completed? Why are the plantations of Mohammed Ali dead, almost everywhere? Why do institutions themselves die, almost the day after their birth, and the work of progress has to be recommenced every day?

Prince Napoleon, in a celebrated, if not popular speech, in Egypt, has said, "Turks lose their trousers, from being too lazy to sew a button on when it is wanted." Is the fault imputable to these rulers? Besides, Turks are not the masters of Egypt. An Ottoman prince reigns over the Fellahs, like a Hanoverian princess over the English, like a prince of Savoy over Italy, and like a daughter of the Bourbons formerly did over Spain; but the country belongs to itself, and public offices are almost all

held by the Fellahs. Must we accuse Islamism, the temperament of the indigenous race, or the climate? No; for the same race, under the same climate, and since that revolution that established the Islam upon the ruins of Christianity, has proved that it is able, not only to produce, but to maintain, preserve, repair its works, and to continue the act of creation. The "*laisser-aller*" principles, the effects of which are but too visible in the railroads or in the Hassan Mosque, appear to me relatively modern ones. They commenced no doubt with the military oligarchy and anarchy of the Mamelukes; they were continued under the first kings. A certain Mohammed Ali, evidently impressed with the future prosperity of his country, and strongly imbued with European ideas, hastened to act, and to produce, in order to draw attention to his power, and his firm resolves in this peculiar line. He introduced the conservative elements into Egypt; but in this, as in many other things, the people must be educated; time and example are eminently requisite. It is but the European workman who can repair all defects, be it in edifices, canals, or machinery, which abound in the country. Here then is the mystery of the hole in the stern explained—it is in fact a flaw in Egyptian customs or habits; the Fellahs have lost thousands, so to say, by forgetting to patch the rents here and there with a useful board. The vessel sped on its way, we overtook a flotilla loaded with grain of every kind—wheat, barley,

beans, millet, and lentils. Boulaq is the port of Upper Egypt; everything that comes from the midland part, halts there. The inhabitants raise the bulwarks of their vessels with a mixture of mud and chopped straw. This sort of composition melts in the water whenever the vessel lurches to the right or left; but as it is not easily dissolved, they have time to repair it. The merchants and peasants come to anchor before the port, sleeping upon their bales of goods; some few of them have their heads shaved by itinerant barbers before they land. Those who come and go, animate the picture; everywhere grey or white sails, hanging from numerous yards or masts, are to be seen. One sees whole families quartered upon rafts piled up with crockeryware; men and jugs coming from Siout, Keneh, and even from Assouan; these floating shops make journeys of two hundred leagues by floating with the stream. Here fishermen bring their spoils. The fish of the Nile are but moderate, they taste muddy; they are caught on hooks without any bait upon them; by dragging their lines along the bottom of the river the hooks fasten to anything they come across. Sea-gulls, another kind of fishermen, with millions of sea mews, and sparrow hawks in thousands, soar in the sky. We catch a glimpse of the gardens, and some of the mysteriously covered windows of the harems on the islands of Rhoda, and about Old Cairo, whilst on the opposite bank the outline of the pyramids is seen behind a curtain of palm trees.

We advanced rapidly until sunset. The variety of objects was no longer so great. The stream, rapid and muddy, kept in by high embankments, flows between two cultivated plains. The horizon is bounded on the right by the Libyan and on the left by the Arabian chain, two yellow ranges of mountains, with the dark land between them. Village succeeds village, all more or less like bee-hives in appearance. Everywhere you see hollows in the banks, where a Fellah, naked to the waist, is drawing water in an enormous leathern vessel and sending it out over the country. This kind of leathern pocket, hung like the balance wheel of a watch, comes down empty, goes up full, and empties its contents into a trench or irrigating canal. This piece of mechanism, known by the name of *chadouf*, is most ingenious and simple, and does a great deal more work than one would at first sight imagine. It is, however, sad to think that a hundred thousand human beings are employed for half the year in an occupation which requires no exercise of the intellect. The land requires water, but it could be watered by some better and more profitable invention. The *sekia* or *noria* is an improvement upon the *chadouf;* the steam-engine is again an improvement on the *sekia*. It is better to use coal than the strength of oxen, and better to use oxen than the muscles of man. Unfortunately, coal is dear, and its use is denied to the Fellah. The poor people who worked upon the banks seemed dropping with fatigue, they

did not even appear to possess any curiosity, for the greater portion never lifted their heads to look at our vessel as we passed. On the other hand we were greatly struck with the classical outlines of their figures; they seemed like so many statues. European sculptors complain that they can find no models; why do they not seek for them on the Nile? An Antinous takes care of goats, the Apollo Belvedere, Achilles, and the Gladiator work the chadouf for forty centimes per day!

At sunset our captain came to anchor; this is usual. You stop wherever you happen to be at the moment. We were alongside a palm wood, close to a little village; two sailors sprang upon the bank, ropes were thrown to them, and we were soon securely moored. Our arrival had caused some consternation amongst a few Fellah vessels, for his Highness's craft of course took the best place. Our neighbours, however, very soon made themselves snug again, and sat down to supper. It appeared to us that this custom was harsh and cruel—to disturb poor people after a hard day's work; so that when our captain ordered them to make more room for us, we begged they might not be disturbed. They returned to their places, however, without appearing to recognise the kindness which had been shown to them. The captain then wished to draw the curtains in order to hide a sight which he thought unworthy of us. I maintained that a supper of cakes and raw carrots does not offend any man so long as he

does not partake of it. What sort of an opinion can these poor people have of us, if they are to be disturbed in this way whenever the stranger passes? What must they think of one another, when a Fellah, who happens to have become a petty officer, takes such strange liberties with his brethren?

No sooner had we commenced to fill up our coal bunkers, than the authorities of the village pressed the whole population, men, women, and children, into the service; some of them seizing sticks to animate one another's zeal, and when the work was done, walking off arm in arm, without the least anger at the blows they had received.

Chance threw us into a tragi-comic scene at Minieh. The country people were passing in a long line into the Viceroy's sugar refinery, with their asses or camels laden with sugar-canes; two great big fellows, with a rope's end in their hands, searched every man and beast, and woe to the Fellah who hid, in the fold of his tunic, or under the saddle of his ass, even the end of a sugar-cane. They were full of importance; I saw them beat half-a-dozen, who merely shook themselves like dogs after a wetting, and retired laughing.

From Boulaq to Keneh, where our friends awaited us, was a journey of eight days, without anything occurring worthy of interest. We advanced leisurely upon our journey, which is not usually the custom, for when the water is low, it is usual to make as much haste as possible, leaving any sight-seeing to

the return journey. Life on the Nile is an adorable monotony. A sand-bank covered with geese and wild ducks, herons and pelicans, sometimes a crocodile aroused from his slumbers by the noise of the engines, a large palm wood, a village of some importance, the chimney of a steam pump, that one takes in the distance for an obelisk, and a conglomeration of pigeon-houses, resembling fortresses—these are the principal objects of interest that attract the traveller's attention. Ahmed said truly, when he spoke of the folly of his fellow-countrymen preserving these devourers of Egypt. I calculated that we had seen more than thirty millions of these feathered ravishers upon our journey. The features of the landscape were ever the same. We remarked that the only difference seemed to be, that the palm trees grew bigger, and that the skins of the peasants grew blacker and blacker; but the type, whether dark or light, never changed—it was always the same Fellah. Mountains approached and receded, as if from caprice; at one moment they were almost lost in the horizon, in the next they met the river's bank in an over-hanging cliff. One day, as we were endeavouring to make out what could have caused an enormous cavity, cut as it were with a saw out of a huge block of limestone, a human figure came down from the mountain; plunging into the river, he reached the vessel that followed us, and hoisting himself on board by the rudder, he asked us for backshish. This man was admirably formed, and

was perfectly naked. Arakel thus explained the apparition, "It is a Coptian monk—Christian after his own fashion; he inhabits a convent perched up there. His brothers, when they are not swimming about for alms, make stockings." It is a more honest occupation than the making of eunuchs, a practice that was carried on for many centuries by the Christian monks of Siout.

We gave backshish to the reverend negro, our sailors also gave him alms; he secured the money in his mouth, jumped into the water, and proceeded to go through the same process on board the other craft. I asked myself the question—had Ahmed's dahabieh received a like visit? If so, the English ladies must have made a great fuss. And our friend? What excuse had he made for this mendicant without trousers? And when a harem passes, great heavens! what happens then between the monks and the eunuchs? The members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, who dispense their charities with well-judged discernment, would no doubt be somewhat scandalised to learn that the Mussulman Fellah gives alms to Christians. The disciples of Mahomet are, to say the least of it, more charitable, and certainly more tolerant, than the followers of Jesus Christ. Here, all doors are open; every one can enter the courts of the rich or the poor who wishes. Religion and custom ordain that they nourish and supply the stranger, without respect to his country or his faith—always ancient hospitality.

Arakel halted half a day at Siout, in order to show us the town, and regale us with a bath in the most famous establishment in Egypt. The bath was excellent; they placed us in a hot-air chamber, shampooed us from head to foot, cracked our joints, washed us with hot water, and after an hour of this sort of amusement, they left us, nearly dead, stretched upon cotton mattresses, with the inevitable narghilly and cup of coffee. This fatiguing operation rested us so well that we were enabled to walk about the town and its environs up to night time, without suffering from the heat or the dust. Siout is a capital town, a centre of commerce, and even a perfect focus of industry. The merchandise of Soudan is here stored in innumerable *okels;* several corporations of artisans are workers in ivory, rhinoceros horn, ostrich feathers and gold dust, which they make into strange-looking jewellery. From the quarter of the decorators we went to the quarter of the manufacturers of Turkish slippers, to the goldsmiths' street, and to the stalls where the pottery is sold. A rich merchant, a very worthy, venerable man, but somewhat anxious to cheat us, did the honours of the okel with all the goodwill imaginable. He only wished us to take home a few cracked horns, a few bouquets of moth-eaten feathers, and all the rubbishy merchandise lying about in his numerous shops; but whilst we were defending our pockets against the attacks of the handsome old fellow, beggars came into him one after another, and

not one left without taking away a cake made of the finest white flour. He emptied a whole basketful of bread, gave us some Mocha coffee, closed the shops, barred the door of the okel, bade us adieu without malice, and mounted a magnificent white ass that awaited him in the street. The town is as silent and still as the bazaar is full of bustle and noise. You might walk a mile in it without seeing more than ten persons. The only noise one hears is the groaning of a mill turned by oxen; for everyone grinds their flour at home. Here white men become still more rare; we had scarcely seen more than a dozen old Turks, gendarmes or cavas, badly dressed; but to make up for this, true Arabs, with their pointed teeth, receding foreheads and high cheek bones less in stature than the common Fellah, but more haughty in their demeanour, and splendidly draped in white burnouses, met us in considerable numbers.

Siout is probably the only Egyptian town which offers a picturesque profile to the eye. Situated upon an eminence at the foot of the Lybian chain, it is full of the decorative, and surpasses the most brilliant imagination of the tourist. Siout leaves nothing to be desired; when towards six o'clock in the evening, a few minutes before sunset, we took the road to return to the vessel, a sincere admiration made us pull up our donkeys a hundred paces from the town, in the middle of a dry field full of cracks from the last inundation. Najac and Dulocle ex-

claimed both at once, "Ah! here is the East, as we see it in our dreams; can it be that this is its birthplace?" It was too much to say; for the entrance to the Golden Horn is more beautiful, and a hundred times grander than the modest profile of Siout; but the impressions which it gave birth to deserve to be noted.

The sun disappeared, the lights and shadows became dissolved, the cold chilled us to the marrow, and we started at a trot towards the avenue of gum-trees that unites the town with the harbour. As we alighted Najac called out to us,

"Gentlemen, I have learnt an Arab word; listen! *donkey* is the Arabic for an ass."

"Wretched man! if you don't take care, the donkey drivers will teach you English."

Is it not strange, that the lower classes in Egypt have retained an English word, whilst the occupation of Bonaparte has not left a single French one in their memory? Our armies have lived in Egypt, whilst English tourists have only passed through. It is true they pass often and in great numbers, whilst travellers from our country are but few. Out of twenty-five pleasure dahabiehs that we passed or met upon the Nile, perhaps ten carried the British flag, and the fifteen others the American, whilst not a tricoloured rag was to be seen.

Ahmed's gallantry had prompted him to hoist English colours. They told us this at Siout, where he had arrived two days before, and that, travelling

day and night, with a favourable wind, he would probably await us at Keneh. I therefore increased the speed of the "Chibine," which I had hitherto designedly kept back; between Siout and Keneh she made but one unnecessary halt, but a halt sacred to usage and a certain superstition.

"It is necessary, *bongré, malgré*, to pay a visit to the Sheik Selim."

"And who is this Sheik Selim?"

"He is a saint."

"Is he a doctor of law or divinity, like the Sheik Aroussy?"

"Better than that."

"Is he then the author of any particularly memorable works? Has he reclaimed the desert, or founded a hospital?"

"Better than all that."

"Confound it! Perhaps he has done some miracles, or made some prophecies?"

"Better than that. Sheik Selim is a man who has lived for forty years upon the bank of the Nile, perfectly naked."

"What does he do?"

"Nothing."

"What does he say?"

"He grunts like a pig."

"Does he, at any rate, say his prayers, and perform his ablutions?"

"Never in his life, because he's a saint."

"But why? for what? From what is he a saint?"

"It has never been known; but it is without doubt a fact."

It appeared that we should have offended our captain and sailors had we not paid the visit; they filled a basket with bread, and took money in their hands in order to do honour to this animal. Never in my life have I looked upon a more revolting creature than this horrible Mahomedan seated in the dust; with knees up to his chin, his arms hanging down by his sides, you would have said it was a monstrosity made for the express purpose of disgusting the human race. His members are withered up by inaction; his woolly head, and blubber-lipped face, stupid and idiotically disgusting, was lighted by two eyes like those of a boiled fish. Upon his skin, all cracked by continual exposure to the sun, his devotees (for he had some) used from time to time to pour oil. Men, women, and children made pilgrimages to see him, seated in a circle around with admiring eyes. My heart absolutely revolted when I saw our captain kiss the hand of this horrible-looking gorilla, and I was equally displeased at Najac for seeing anything to laugh at in so hideous an object.

"My dear friend," said he, "I laugh because the Shiek Selim is a plagiarist; he has found his get up in the lives of the saints."

"Mussulman Saints?"

"Better than that."

CHAPTER XV.

It was three o'clock at night when the "Chibine" came to anchor before Keneh. A telegram, despatched from Farchout, had warned our friends. Ahmed, Mr. Longman, and the ladies awaited us on the banks of the Nile. No sooner had we made fast, and the plank which formed a bridge had been run on shore, than Ahmed, then Miss Grace, and after them the estimable Longman trio, came on board. The Fellah alone embraced us, England shook our hands. Eliacim, ever ready, brought us frothing coffee and chibouks, for coffee is never served without *kaïmak*, or froth upon it. Everybody seemed to be really happy, and it was easy to perceive that no quarrel had taken place during our absence; but although my curiosity, or more properly speaking the interest I felt, was strained to the greatest pitch, I could hardly say to them, point blank, "Are you engaged, my friends?" I was forced to resort to the commonplace questions of, "Were you visited by the Coptian monk?"

"Thank God, no; we travelled by night."

"Did you go and see Sheik Selim?

"You know very well my dislike to people of that sort."

Grace, on her part, seemed proud to conduct us. "Gentlemen," said she, "you are about to see a new phase of Egypt; the palm trees have branches, and we gather spice from them. The ladies of Keneh walk about without veils in the streets; we have this morning eaten fresh grapes in that part of the desert belonging to the good Ahmed."

She called him "Ahmed." What a miracle!

"The branching palm is the *Doum*, a fine tree, whose timber is much appreciated. As regards its fruit, asses and donkeys eat it with avidity, they say, but we found it detestable. The ladies of Keneh, who walk about without veils, are simply '*Almées*;' that interesting tribe, banished from Cairo by Abbas, has found a home in Upper Egypt, at Keneh, at Esneh, and below the cataract, in that town of Seyneh where Juvenal, eighteen hundred years ago, atoned for his virtuous excesses. The young ladies whom we occasionally met, did assuredly not date back so far as the proscription of Abbas; some of them were at the outside but nine or ten years of age, but the race had been evidently perpetuated. It seemed perhaps strange, that so much industry and luxury was to be found in a far country, remote from the capital, and upon the borders of a most arid desert; but the fact was that Keneh, like Siout, is a commercial town, and one of the caravan stations. Siout is the emporium of Darfour, Keneh receives the merchandise of Kosseïr. The products of Hedjas cross the Red Sea, are landed at Kosseïr,

and come across the desert to meet the Nile at Keneh, in order to reach Cairo, Alexandria, and Europe. This route will no doubt be abandoned when the Isthmus of Suez is pierced; but Keneh will even then, without doubt, find resources in the exportation of sulphur from the mines and quarries that surround her. The Red Sea is bounded by priceless treasures which that evil genius, Thirst, obstinately protects against the desire of man. Where are the means for exporting the produce of a mine, be it one of gold or emeralds, in a region which heaven never moistens with a drop of water from one end of the year to the other?"

Ahmed, who was giving us these explanations, shortly invited us to accompany him to the town. The conveyances awaited us beneath a small wood of gum-trees, but I failed to see those magnificent horses that had inspired us with so much admiration and nervousness that we saw at Kouzbarrah. The cavalcade was composed of white asses alone, beautiful, it is true, and caparisoned with velvet and gold. He related to us how that all his stock had gone to the wars against King Theodore, in the English ranks. Two remount officers had penetrated as far as his establishment, and had taken, without bargaining, the whole of his stable. There remained but the young animals of the haras. "But you remember," said he, "in what terms the Arabian poet of former days celebrated the fertility of Egypt:—'I passed at early morn the banks of the Nile, and I

perceived the father and mother alone. I returned at eventide, and already the foal bounded by its mother's side.'"

The road is nothing remarkable; it is but a path crossing over the usual canals for irrigation. It led us right into the narrow streets of the Bazaar. It was not exactly our nearest way, but it had been so arranged that we should pass through it, in order to see the sights that it gave birth to.

Our host's house seemed simple and unostentatious; he had purchased it from an old "Djellab" who was about to retire, the slave trade being no longer in existence. We were consequently located in an old shop, where human flesh and blood had been the staple commodity, but cleaned, disinfected, and carefully whitewashed from top to bottom. Few riches, no curiosities: the hangings and curtains of English print, the divans covered with burnous material; they had brought the beds and the bedclothes from the Dahabieh for the ladies' use. As far as we were concerned, we wanted nothing; our lodging floated alongside the Nile, and we would not have changed it for a marble palace.

"The sun is too hot yet," said Ahmed, "to conduct you over my improvements, for at least an hour; rest yourselves, take a few refreshments, and pardon my asking you to a house that has but such few resources."

He left us to make arrangements for our comfort, and almost at the same moment Miss Grace took

me on one side. "I have a thousand things to tell you," said she; "let us go and chat in that sort of drawing-room off the Selamlik."

Her friends and mine saw that we wished to be alone; we heard the murmur of their conversation, we could even see them through a large slit in the mud wall. Najac enjoyed a chibouk whilst listening to Mr. Longman's descriptions; and Dulocle conversed with the old maid, emptying large glasses of fresh water—I never knew a more formidable water drinker.

Grace made me sit beside her; her rosy cheeks were blushing, and her large eyes burned with unusual brilliancy. Her beautiful Grecian nose expanded, her quick breathing imperceptibly raised the white muslin body of her dress, whilst her little feet impatiently beat upon the ground.

There was a moment's silence: I was waiting for her to commence, for, in fact, I ought not to have been the questioner. However, I had pity on her, and I thought it would be but charitable to help her a little.

"Well, mademoiselle," said I, "this timid man has then declared himself?"

"Yes; not once, but ten times—but never to me."

"Nothing is so reserved as true love, until the day that it becomes courageous."

"He has confided in Mr. Longman, he has even declared his passion to my two friends; I know all."

"Do you regret that he has not pushed his audacity further?"

"No, certainly not. All this troubles me fearfully. I need hardly tell you that this fever of apprehension spoils all the enjoyment of my voyage; but this love, hanging over my head at every hour, like the sword of Damocles, prevents me from enjoying the wonders that surround us; the objects appear to me in the strangest of colours. Do not fancy that I think I ought to be pitied. Not at all; it is a sweet and a proud position to know that one is beloved by a good man, superior to many others."

"I perceive, with great pleasure, that at length you do him justice."

"The defects of education are but nothing when one comes to think upon the matter. A rude surface is easily polished, I imagine; and even in England, were I to espouse a gentleman farmer or a rich merchant (there is nothing to prove that God intends such rare birds for my special benefit), it would doubtless give me much trouble to remodel my dear lord. I cannot ever hope that a lord will deign to notice me, whilst my tastes and habits conform but ill to my present means. To remain an old maid—'*à coiffer St. Catherine*,' as they say in France—I do not positively detest such a thing, I should perforce even then be compelled to turn instructress to the young Longmans that are going to appear; however, if there is any other method of altering my fate, I do not detest myself so much

so to drive away happiness like an unwelcome guest."

"We quite agree, my friend, and there remains nothing more but to offer my congratulations to two persons who are equally dear to me."

"Wait a moment; it is true that I greatly esteem Ahmed. I confess even that I admire him, and, if this is not enough, I will add that he possesses the best sympathies of my heart; but I must be positively blinded by an all-absorbing passion were I to close my eyes to the many obstacles that are placed between us."

"First of all, religion; is it not so?"

"No; we have conversed much upon the subject of Mahommedanism, and I believe that it is but badly understood in Europe. God is of no particular sect; he must see that nine-tenths of the human race are in the wrong upon the truth of certain points of Eternity, and he will hardly punish in eternity the errors of those poor souls whom he would have created infallible. He will receive into his bosom all those who have known him well or ill, and have conscientiously endeavoured to serve him. Ahmed is more of a Christian, upon the whole, than the greater portion of the freethinkers of England and France, who every day marry believers and make happy homes with them. Had I, from infancy been brought up with the idea that out of the Roman Catholic Church no one can be saved, I would refuse to join my fate to one that eternity

would separate from me; but the faith which I profess is liberal enough to embrace a thousand contradictions. True Christianity condemns no one; it imposes upon the believer but a small number of dogmas, all of which I have found again in the Koran."

"Then everything is for the best, and there remains but to arrange the details of the ceremony."

"Wait a moment! Do you not perceive that my mind is full of objections, which I cannot get clear of? Never could a European girl, well born, and decently educated, consent to enter the harem of a Mussulman, unless she had entirely lost her head. The harem—that odious prison that I have seen, into which I have penetrated, from which I fled with more disgust——"

"*Il y a fagot, et fagot*, Molière has truly said. Have you not visited the house where our friend keeps his mother and sister shut up?"

"Yes, but——"

"You never met either slaves, buffoons, or those half-human figures that keep watch over Oriental harems, there?"

"It is nevertheless true that the miserable people are locked in there."

"It is necessary—custom ordains it; but the mistress of the house, that is to say, Ahmed's mother, has a duplicate key in her pocket. Were it otherwise, could our friend travel about as he liked—last

week at Kouzbarrah, and this week at Keneh? An apartment where no one enters except the master, his wife and their maid, is it other, tell me, than the second story of an English house? The selamlik is the parlour, and the harem the bedroom. Remember, too, that married women are less often seen in the streets of London than in the bazaar of Cairo. Egyptians are always abroad; we meet no one but women in carriages, on donkeys, or on foot, according to their condition. Here are prisoners truly to be pitied!"

"It is true they go out, but they take the curtains of their prisons with them—for in my opinion their veils are nothing else."

"What! Miss Grace, is it you that raise objections to the veil! But I have never seen you without a veil from the day that you disembarked at Alexandria. The sun, the dust, and the wind ordain this precaution more despotically than the jealousy of man. I comprehend that a custom, readily accepted for the preservation of your complexion, becomes intolerable when it is forced upon you against your will; but you must sacrifice something to the habits and prejudices of the population, and to the brutality of the poor people that surround us. Orientals of every age, many centuries before the coming of Mahomet, have covered their women with veils, because the grosser passions of the lower orders would respect them only at that price. The Prophet ordained these laws in consequence; but as

nations commence to become less barbarous, the veil becomes less necessary, and the rulers, acquiescing in the manners of the day, reduce the matter to the greatest simplicity. Already the women of Constantinople cover the face with a gauze that enhances rather than hides it; the family of the Viceroy commence to import this custom to Cairo. We meet, in the Choubrah Avenue, some great ladies masked upon this principle, and more easily seen through their white veils than you were just now through your green grenadine one."

She answered, somewhat hastily, "It is barbarians who ought to adopt our manners, not we theirs."

"Upon my faith, I scarcely know if people do well to call one another barbarians. It is a brevet of inferiority that each one gives to his neighbour, perhaps thoughtlessly, and without profit to the public good. It would be better, I imagine, to esteem one another as much as possible, and to carry about with us an ample supply of tolerance. The inhabitants of Rome who go to London deprive themselves of the pleasure of playing the piano on Sunday. English people who go to Rome for the Easter fêtes, fast upon Good Friday—reciprocal sacrifices; perfect harmony amongst people is established at this price."

"And is it also necessary for this perfect harmony that an English woman should marry a Mussulman, submit to the law of polygamy, and submit to keep house with three creatures, black,

yellow, or copper-coloured, who would call her 'my sister?'"

"Mademoiselle, Ahmed will marry but one woman, and if you can for one moment doubt this, you little know him."

"He loves but me, at this moment, I quite believe—I am even sure of it; who will answer for him later? Have you forgotten the horrible things he himself related to us in the train, and the promiscuous intercourse of the harem, where children were born by the dozen around one father? Who will prove that your friend will not eventually give way to Oriental customs?"

"Your influence, mademoiselle, and that unlimited power which a woman like you always obtains over him she loves."

"Who is she who has not deceived herself with the same hope, at least once in her lifetime? The human heart is about the same everywhere, and I hear in every direction that deception is the coin with which confidence is repaid. In Europe, at any rate, there is a law that protects; but here, with one word, a husband can condemn his wife, and without even telling her, can degrade her to an inferior position, in a house where she had always been the queen. What do you say to that?"

"Nothing; simply because it is about the same everywhere, with or without the approbation of the law. England is a country possessing good morality. What then? Know this, that a husband can always

abandon, betray, ruin, and humiliate his wife; he can give her rivals at home or abroad, in public or in private, and kill her inch by inch, without the magistrate's interference. Marriage life is like a duel in a battle. If the husband and wife cannot agree, they can strangle one another, without their neighbours dreaming of interfering. Rely, then, simply upon yourself; but no false modesty; believe in yourself, have faith in your youth and beauty, and above all, in that moral ascendancy that will outlive all the rest. Just look for a moment! Look at that poor devil who is trying to read his fate in your eyes! Has one ever seen a devotee more absorbed? A dog before his master; is he more humble or more submissive?"

"I should prefer if he were less humble. There is, in his submission, something that savours of habit. One loves to bend a being that resists, or that is proud; but these Fellahs are like reeds, that bend to the least breath. Why is it that he is nothing in his country?"

"Simply because he does not choose to be anything. Is Mr. Longman anything in his country?"

"No; certainly he is not."

"Do you esteem him less? Would he be of more consideration, more independent, and more powerful, if he had sought, and obtained, a public office?"

"What a difference! Amongst us, one gentleman is as good as another. Rights are equal, defined, recognised, and protected. Here, a man

is nothing, so long as he is not in the service of the Prince; it is the employment that gives rank, and even the titles of nobility; a gendarme in rags, takes the inner side of the pavement, before the intelligent, hard-working and rich Fellah. In a society thus organised, what rank would the wife of simply a rich man like Ahmed, hold?"

"Ah! by Jove, mademoiselle, whatever rank she chose. You have only to choose. Ahmed has no ambition, and, for my part, I praise him for it. But he will push himself on, even to-morrow, if it is your desire. What would you wish him to be, Bey or Pacha?"

"You are laughing at me; but I am sure that you read my inmost thought. Would you give your daughter to a man who could be given the bastinado to-morrow, by the order of a Moudir?"

"No, certainly not; but Ahmed is not one of those that would suffer in this way. Modest as he appears to you to be, he is much thought of in a high quarter. The Viceroy is too good a judge of men to ignore the existence of an agriculturist such as he is. If he had thought well to ask for a position in education, in public works, in the Treasury, or even in his Highness's cabinet, he would have soon made his way, like Ali Bey Moubarek, and many other Fellahs of merit."

"Do you think so?"

"I affirm it."

"Well! this is not all. I have kept for the last

the most absurd if you will, but the most feminine, the most doleful of all my scruples."

I, in my turn, began to blush like a child; nevertheless, I could not, for the life of me, guess what there was she had left unexplained.

"Girls of my country," said she, "are not brought up in convents; from our earliest youth we are taught to look upon marriage as the object of our existence. I have known for a long time that woman's destiny, according to God's laws, is to nurture and bring up certain little rosy angels with flaxen curls; but alas! I cannot ignore the fact, that in every country the children take sometimes after the father, sometimes after the mother. Why should I be untruthful? You would not believe me even if I were. I imagine myself in a nursery closed with bars, and more sombre, more frightful, than the dungeons of the Tower of London. I am surrounded by a multitude of little black beings, with woolly heads and grinning faces, more like monkeys than anything else, who all call out to me at once, in an unknown tongue. Can you comprehend the horror that seizes me when I think of this? To be a mother, and to be unable to love? To be afraid of one's offspring!—to feel that they belong to another race! All my other objections, which you have almost overruled by your arguments, are nothing in comparison to this one."

"It is your heart that you must listen to, Miss Grace, were it but to place it in accordance with your reason. Nothing is so blind as instinct;

it is in this, let me say so without offence, that we approach the beasts of the field. Ahmed's colour alarms you; he is neither fair nor white like a Yorkshire farmer—but colour is not a certain indicator of the inferiority of races."

"It may be so; I know not. He has many ideas, much eloquence. He is an honest man—he does good—he loves me. I am not ungrateful, and I would not wish to be unjust; but I do not feel decided, and unless something extraordinary happens, which is a long time coming, I fear I shall never be so."

What answer could I give to such good reasons? Miss Grace's resistance seemed naturally and singularly right. Do you know of many orphans without dowry who defend the territory foot by foot against a handsome man of thirty years of age, supported by a few millions? We rejoined the company, but it was not for long. Ahmed was naturally anxious to know everything, and in what terms Miss Grace had spoken of him. I told him everything, with the exception of the most humiliating portion, because all the advice in the world could scarcely change the colour of his skin. He protested that his love and devotion could never permit him to imprison his wife; she should wear but a thin veil, like the grand ladies of Stamboul; he swore a constancy and fidelity without reproach, he scorned a divorce and defied polygamy. And if Grace dreamt of honours, he was sufficiently in love to succumb to her wildest ambition.

"My dear friend," said I, "it is easy to speak, but the most difficult part is yet to be done."

"What more?"

"*Dame!* it only remains for you to please her."

His eyes opened with amazement; he did not understand me. I added—

"Your stupefaction touches me, but, in fact, it is my duty to initiate you in our customs. You have passed twenty-five or thirty years in a world where the most beautiful white women, Circassian or Georgian, are bought for ten thousand francs, more or less. For a hundred louis more the merchant guarantees you certain accomplishments. You take the young person on trial—pardon me, I mean to say to study; she is examined for you, she is watched night and day, they ascertain in your interest that she neither snores nor walks in her sleep—in fact, that she is in every way perfect. You naturally suppose——"

"I suppose nothing of the sort; little as I have lived amongst you I have been able to comprehend that your love resembles in theory that which is described in Arabian poems of a bygone age. I have no more idea of making a bargain of Miss Grace than to purchase the Vendome column for its weight in brass. Love and glory are, in one word, things whose value are not to be ascertained by figures; furthermore, I have carefully avoided to sound the magnitude of my fortune in the young English lady's ears. I have shown her all my labours, and all that amount

of good which I am endeavouring to accomplish, in the hope that eventually her esteem will respond to mine. I have endeavoured to make her understand that I love and admire her, that my devotion and obedience belong to her, for these things are the only price that a man can offer in exchange for a woman's heart. What could you do more if you were in my place? I cannot change myself into a blue bird!"

"Besides, who knows that she might not answer, 'I prefer green parroquets!' Nobody asks you to do impossibilities; but, were you even to try, no one in the world could guarantee your success. Continue as you have begun, continue charming to the end; let us hope that some day or another love may be born. And now, my dear fellow, have your asses saddled, and show us your desert. It is five o'clock."

The domain which the people of Keneh called *Sahri*, which means magic, is two kilomètres from the town. There is no road to it—to what end? The sand is to the horseman, what the sea is to the sailor, a road both broad and long. Scarcely had we left the suburbs when we saw that vast plain before us. I know not what unlimited instinct of liberty was awakened in our hearts. The eye shone, the breast dilated with joy, a unanimous desire seized upon us to gallop in any direction, no matter where, over that virgin soil which belongs to no one. A legend, much believed in Egypt,

pretends that Abbas Pacha had married an Arab of the desert, and that this princess lived faithful to the desert, even upon the throne. She was never happy but in the midst of the sand, away from towns, and always slept beneath a tent at the door of her palace.

The end of our journey was soon attained. It was a veritable oasis, enclosed by a wall of mud. Upon a piece of land, of from eight to ten hectares, all the fruit trees of Asia, all the plants that would grow, every sort of industrial agriculture, were represented by some magnificent specimens. The tamarind-tree, taken from slips, measured almost a metre in circumference; the date-trees commenced to grow high; the mulberries and olives were in full bearing. A square of sugar-canes astonished us by their vigorous looks; each stalk was a stick big enough to fell an ox with. What astonished us above all was the caprice with which this luxuriant vegetation seemed to ignore the seasons and to brave every law of nature. A few palm-trees still bore the ripe fruits of the preceding year, whilst others were already in flower. Ahmed explained all these miracles to us in three words. There is neither spring nor autumn in a latitude where, on the 20th of January, the thermometer stands at thirty degrees in the shade. There is nothing but alternate humidity and drought, according to the will of the Nile.

"Know, also," proudly added Miss Grace, "that

he has made himself master of the Nile! The water flows at all seasons in his fields, in his pastures, and to the feet of his trees that you see thriving so vigorously."

"By Jove," said I; "I should much like to know how. The question of the cheapness of water has much occupied me since I first set foot in Egypt, inasmuch as the earth produces nothing without it."

Ahmed was about to reply, but she interrupted him. "And the current of the Nile, sir, do you count that for nothing? That power, also gratuitous, which represents that of several million horses between Assouan and Cairo—was that to be left for ever unused? The embankment established, or, more properly speaking, sketched out at the summit of the Delta, will, perhaps, some day resist the pressure of the stream, and will flood the land—but when? The expenses of the first commencement, if one has recourse to European labour, is represented by a hundred millions, and if the Fellahs are condemned to do it all, by millions of lives."

I could no longer contain my admiration.

"Really, mademoiselle, you reason well upon Egyptian affairs; it seems to me that you have learnt much in a short time, and I hardly know who to compliment, the master or the pupil."

An embarrassed look passed between them. "It is true," answered Ahmed, "that mademoiselle is greatly interested, besides which her intelligence .... the justness of her mind...."

"Hold your tongue! We had a thousand times rather listen to mademoiselle. Come, Miss Grace, we must beg of you to finish the conversation you began so well."

"I don't know any more. You have a way of encouraging people that takes away my courage. Monsieur Ahmed remembered a machine that he had seen at Marly, and also another apparatus, I believe, that has been used in Paris itself, upon the Pont de la Samaritane. Your countrymen know how to force the waters of the Seine up to the fifth story of the houses, and even to the plain of Versailles. It is on the same principle that our friend has constructed a force pump, the object of which is the Nile itself. Two large wheels, turned by the current, are thrown into gear by a strong piston, driving the water through a cylinder up to the entrance of an aqueduct of six kilometres, the overfall of which is here."

"It is very correctly explained, mademoiselle. I shall never in my life forget a description which flowed from such charming lips. It is thus, then, that this vegetation owes its prosperity to the work of the Nile."

"More than that," she added; "for the water always carries with it its mud, and it is thus that the sand is improved by its amalgamation with it."

"Better and better! Miss Grace is interested in amalgamations."

"I even know, for certain, some things that you

doubt, my dear sir. If you will permit me to conduct you, I will show you a mill which will perfectly astound you."

I took care not to contradict her. She guided us briskly, and with head erect, quite proud of her position. Ahmed followed her movements with his eyes, in a perfect ecstasy. In a corner of the enclosure she opened the door of a shed, where two camels, yoked in front, turned a piece of granite round in some thick whitish-looking matter. Our first impulse was to laugh at so primitive a mill; but she, without being in the least disconcerted, regained her advantage. "The mechanism is not new," said she, smiling; "what do you think of the material in it?"

Najac took up a handful of the powder. "It is neither flour nor plaster," mused he; "one would almost imagine it was crushed bones."

"Precisely! This Fellah, our friend, has for the last ten years repeatedly heard that phosphates are wanting in Egypt; in addition to which he has remarked in his travels that the deserts are perfectly covered with bones. The caravans do not take away the bodies of the animals who perish; at the most they skin them—the jackals, hyænas, and vultures do the rest. Ahmed has taken the trouble to work this open mine; he has swept the valley from Keneh to Kosseïr, and here is phosphate that costs him nothing but the carriage."

"Mademoiselle forgets," he added, "that the

manufacture of other things for his Highness's refinery indemnifies me largely for all my expenses."

"I was going to say so."

"Pardon me! And now, if you will go into the open country, Miss Grace will show you some grain of different kinds that this phosphate has ripened on the sandy plain."

He had exaggerated nothing; the corn was almost ripe at Keneh; the bearded wheat was turning yellow; a dozen little Fellahs, under the superintendence of an overseer, watered a field of barley. Upon the whole space of the 420 hectares, the yellow sand had disappeared beneath a green carpet, where every description of crop flourished together—beans, maize, lentils, lucerne, and millet; but the principal cultivation seemed to be that of the castor-oil plant, which, in these latitudes, is no longer herbaceous, but becomes a little tree.

The excursion lasted as long as daylight permitted, and when we returned, the cannon of the Rhamadan had been fired an hour ago.

We ate our dinner to the sound of music; it appears that the custom of Keneh so ordains it. All one side of the selamlik was devoted to the *Gawazies*—Bohemians of both sexes, who dance, sing, and accompany themselves on an instrument of five strings. The orchestra arranged itself by families; the brothers or the lovers of the ladies accompanied them in their songs; the mothers encouraged them; and several Bohemians of an advanced age tasted

glasses of alcohol as they were passed round. Of the dinner there is but little to say, except that Dulocle counted forty-four distinct courses between the soup and dessert, and that Najac's appetite was somewhat spoilt by the incessant music. After dinner, much to our surprise, the Almées were introduced, though, perhaps, more decently clothed than the one we had seen in Cairo. Fortunately, the ladies could make but little of those vulgarities which we, alas! too well understood. Mr. Longman was in a perfect fever, and I whispered in his ear, "How the devil can Ahmed show us such a sight?"

"It is my fault," said he. "I had read in my guide book that the dancers of Keneh are divine. I asked him where I could see any, and he answered that the custom was that they should come in with the dessert."

"He does not appear to amuse himself much; suppose we ask him to send them away?"

"Can he? Here come plenty of his friends on every side to enjoy the fête.

"Then you would do well to take these ladies back to their apartments."

He followed our advice; and we ourselves before midnight took our way back to our vessel. Ahmed accompanied us, and he was no sooner outside than he began to make excuses for the fête.

"We never know," said he, "how strangers will take this—whether they will be pleased or disgusted.

Last winter I received a duke, and a young student of great talent; the young student laughed."

"And the duke?"

"He? Well, as he had drunk two bottles of champagne, he wanted to show our Almées the real Parisian dance. His feet almost touched the ceiling, and the notables of Keneh slapped their thighs, saying, 'That a duke!'"

"Whatever you do, I should recommend you to abstain from inviting ladies to witness this dance."

He was about to reply, but his ass making a false step, interrupted him.

"That should warn you," said I, "that it is time for you to return; your beast, too, wants rest."

"If I leave you, I shall say good-bye; but even if I do return, I shall not sleep any the more. The house is full of people that I cannot turn out, and they will keep it up until morning."

"Let us, then, go over and see this wonderful hydraulic pump that Miss Grace described to us."

"The moment is hardly well chosen for studying machinery. When I have shown you a huge enchained phantom struggling on the Nile, will you be any the wiser?"

"Perhaps so; I will not go to bed without ascertaining ifyou have solved the problem of water for all."

The aspect alone of the enormous mass which I saw looming up through the vapour on the banks of the Nile, at once convinced me that my doubts were not without foundation.

"Oh! here is a plaything that cannot have cost you anything short of one hundred thousand francs?"

"Dearer than that—almost double."

"A steam-engine of the same power would come much cheaper, would not encumber the stream, or impede the navigation, and would not be subject to prosecution by law, administrative measures, or certain backshish that I see floating about in the air. You will perhaps tell me that these inconveniences are balanced by the saving in coal; but you have discovered but one argument, and in addition you only assist yourself. Why do you not apply yourself to the construction of a simple piece of machinery of one-horse power? Do this and you will save the hundred thousand labourers who work the Chadouf, without counting an equal number of horses, camels, and oxen, who turn the wheels of the *sakies*."

"Yes, you are right; I am an egotist. You must think over this idea, and we will speak of it to-morrow."

He counted without his host. We started the next morning at sunrise without bidding him adieu. Mr. Mariette had written to say that he awaited us at Luxor, to show us the ruins of Thebes; whilst from another source we received intimation of the approach of the Viceroy's sons. If we had not at once started, his duties would have compelled our much respected cicerone to return; accordingly, I

sent word to Ahmed, knowing full well that the English people would never leave the Nile without seeing the Theban remains.

Mariette Bey received us with open arms; he is a man composed of the most extraordinary materials in the world; wise as a Benedictine, brave as a Zouave, patient as he who carves fragile materials, and artless and good as a child. There are few so unhappy, and few so gay; devoured by the slow fire of a tropical climate, and still more cruelly injured by the death of those whom he loves; badly paid—almost insignificant in the rank that he takes; viewed with unfriendly eyes by the functionaries of the people, who do not understand what he is doing, and consider science a European superfluity; tied, notwithstanding all this, to a mysterious land, that he has been excavating for the last twenty years, in order to tear its secrets from it; delicate and honest, to a point that renders him ridiculous; the chief supporter of that admirable museum that he has made, and that is so seldom visited; the author of those publications on ruins that posterity will pay for, in their weight in gold;—notwithstanding all this, in vain he solicits encouragement from the Ministers. He respects France, Egypt, and humanity, and when he dies of despair, perhaps they will put up a statue to his memory. He was formerly Keeper of the Museum of Antiquities in London, and was known in the scientific world by several works

which were much esteemed, when the Duc de Luynes formed the idea of sending him out here to excavate. He commenced by endeavouring to discover the Apian tombs, more difficult to find in the desert than the planet Neptune in the sky. For fourteen weeks he lived on the sand, close to Memphis, beneath a shelter which deserves that all scientific people make a pilgrimage to it. The expense and the delays discouraged the Duc de Luynes. France had, however, faith in Mr. Mariette. We sent him some little resources, and one fine day, guided by signs that he alone could interpret, he opened the entrance of those admirable caverns, where the sacred oxen were kept in monolith tombs, polished like mirrors, and as vast as the dining halls of Paris.

This discovery was followed by a hundred others, and the Egyptian Government, beginning at length to grasp the fact that they ought themselves to expedite the discovery of these scientific treasures buried in the subsoil, lent Mr. Mariette to France. It was at the expense of the Viceroys, and to their eternal honour, that he was enabled to discover the table of Abydos, and that list of kings which confirms, against all expectation, the chronological calumnies of Manethon.

I can understand the man of science being fond of Egyptian antiquities; in an artistic point of view there is little to be said in their favour. The contemporaries of Sesostris, who were the Egyptian

Louis XIV.'s, were miraculous constructors rather than great architects, skilful and expeditious workmen, rather than artistic sculptors. From the time of Moses to the epoch of the Ptolemies, all the fine arts of the country, such as architecture, sculpture, and painting, have struck us by their solidity and harshness, by the spirit of tradition pushed to the extreme, rather than by their originality of genius. It is necessary to go back to the tombs of the first dynasties in order to refind pure and ingenious talent, that hieratic regulations soon paralysed. A few specimens well executed are found here and there, but one could search the whole of Egypt from one end to the other, without finding a work to be compared to the Temple of Thesis or to Milo's Venus. The enormous is not the great; knowledge and facility bear no relation to genius.

It may be argued that Egypt prepared the path to Grecian art, and that Thebes was formerly the instructress of Athens, like Perugin was Raphael's master. There would certainly be injustice in asking the question, why the author of the "Marriage of the Virgin" did not make the Madonna of Foligno. It is the law of progress in one of its best known applications; but the law of progress, so far as we can ascertain from the manuscripts we possess, has never been verified in Egypt. The most ancient works are the most beautiful of all; it would seem as if a colony had carried with it

to the banks of the Nile a ready-made and perfect civilization, which, from the date of its arrival seems to have been but a long decay. In the tombs of Beni Hassan, dating of the VIIth dynasty, and which are older than Abraham, one can still see pictures full of life and even of gaiety. All the monuments of earlier days testify to a country life, abundant, happy, and free. There is no allusion to the greatness of kings, the despotism of priests, to proofs of another existence, the formal and minute details of which cover the monuments of degenerated Egypt. The architecture of the first era offers to us specimens of the pure Doric style, the same as is to be found in the Parthenon at Athens, and, on the whole, far superior to the pretentious enormities of the Sesostrian style. It is true that this grave question is judged upon very slender grounds. Many edifices have disappeared; the more reason for us to argue upon those still in existence.

People in France imagine that all Egyptian temples and tombs are composed of granite; they are almost entirely wrong. Granite is a rare stone; it is found but in the neighbourhood of Assouan, almost beneath the tropic of Cancer. The ancients used to come as far as this to fetch it for their statues and obelisks, but when it was necessary to build a temple they emyloyed either sandstone or limestone, which were found on the spot. The limestone temples have passed into kilns piece by piece, the

sandstone ones alone have remained—because they were useless. They bid fair to disappear altogether, or, at least, the precious remains of that ancient antiquity are more exposed to ruin to-day than in the time of the Mamelukes. The Nile commences to undermine Luxor; a few days before our arrival there, a temple gave way, and fell to the ground, without any apparent cause; but the greatest enemy of all is the tourist, who, in order to take away one specimen throws down a whole wall, or effaces hieroglyphics in order to write his name. It is absolutely necessary in the cause of science to put a stop to such destructions, were it even only until Mr. Mariette has copied the inscriptions.

For two whole days Mr. Mariette took us from temple to temple, to Karnak, to Luxor, to the palace of Rameses, to Deir-el-Bahari, and to Gournah; he could have kept us for a year without wearying our attention. History, archæology, and anecdote, flowed from this source; he explained hieroglyphics as we passed, argued upon a quotation from Herodotus, an assertion of Bossuet, or an article of Renan's—all this from memory and without a shadow of pedantry. Ah! those happy days, I shall never forget them, and if ever the old Nile takes it into its head to write its history, it is Mr. Mariette who will hold the pen—he has seen so much of all these things. One evening he amused us by telling of the numbers of princes he had

guided across Upper Egypt. Prince Napoleon, the Count de Chambord, the Prince of Wales, the Comte de Paris, the Duc de Chartres, the Duc de Brabant, and now the King of the Belgians. The only prince of whom he retains a dislike I hesitate to mention, and nevertheless! . . .

It was a few months after the discovery of Serapium that Mr. Mariette was suddenly recalled to Paris; he was unable to bring back with him all those riches that he had just conquered for France. He made a large hole in the ground, in which he buried fourteen cases of antiquities, the most interesting of which contained the remains of the ox that was wounded but not killed by Cambyses, the thigh bone proving that the sacred animal had been cured. An august stranger, young and a poet, came to visit the tombs of Memphis; the Arabs employed in the excavations, induced by the hope of backshish, revealed the place where these cases were hidden, and, as it is already known, the companions of the Archduke persuaded him to lay base hands upon the treasure.

The fourteen cases were taken up; they were sent to Alexandria, they crossed the Adriatic, and went to furnish a superb château, where they are, no doubt, to be found to-day; whilst as far as the culprit is concerned, he finished his existence in so tragic a manner in another hemisphere that I decline to publish his name.

CHAPTER XVI.

At two o'clock on the 23rd of January, as we were returning from a little excursion, the flotilla of the young Princes appeared in sight. Three steamers, a handsome dahabieh, and a floating stable arrived, made fast to the quay at Luxor. The first carried the Princes, the second the governor, M. le Commandant Haillot and his family, the third contained the horses, and the rear was brought up by the Moudir of Keneh.

As soon as the vessels were moored we paid our visit to their Highnesses. Seated upon the same divan, three young men of apparently sixteen years of age or thereabouts, received us, placed according to their ages. Mehemet Pacha, the heir presumptive to the throne, appeared in the uniform of a sergeant in the military school, the others wore the simple uniform of that establishment. They received us most courteously, remarking that their father's guests were also theirs. Hussein Pacha had completed his education in Paris, whilst Hassan Pacha is now in London. They are all well read, and well educated, and seemed quite prepared to take up their position amongst European princes—a conclusion that proved to us a correct one, from after experience.

Upon their arrival, our voyage assumed a gala form; it was one perpetual fête. All the dahabiehs

that were cruising on the Upper Nile, hearing that Thebes was the centre of attraction, crowded round the port. The great day of the Beiram, that closes the Rhamadan and commences the new year (the 25th of January, 1868), was one of unusual festivity. Money was distributed everywhere; they choked themselves with mutton; the Schèvirmè was seen roasting everywhere, whilst the surface of the Nile was covered with smoke. The young Princes received the homage of their subjects, in full dress, on board their dahabieh; we breakfasted with them; after which everyone embarked in the Moudir's vessel, which descended the Nile, and deposited us upon the left bank about a league from Thebes, and before Bab-el-Molouk.

The horses and asses, all harnessed, awaited us on the bank of the river. The first movement of the Princes was to gallop off, follow who could! These young persons were full of spirits whenever the duties of their rank would permit it. The cavalcade spread over the plain, each one taking the road that seemed best to him. The inhabitants of the river's side rushed together in small crowds, and were as quickly dispersed; curiosity had attracted them, but the fear of blows almost as soon dispersed them. They loved their young sovereign, who was one day to reign over them, and they would have been delighted to testify their affection, but the escort prevented any such exhibitions. The reason for this was a few days afterwards explained to us; we

found ourselves in the village of Luxor without escort, and were immediately surrounded by a crowd of people, vociferating for backshish; so importunate were they, that they would assuredly have taken what we had in our pockets had not assistance arrived. These people commence by familiarity, which they carry to impertinence, from the moment that one fails to teach them respect; it is, therefore best, under all circumstances to keep them at a distance.

The young equestrians pulled up on the border of the desert, at the foot of the Lybian chain. A deep, narrow, arid, desolate gorge opened before us. It was the road to the tombs; that road which the ancient kings followed when going to their last resting-place. We halted and took order. The Princes placed themselves at the head of the cavalcade, and, for more than an hour, the *cortége* defiled like a silent procession through the ravine, which cannot be other than the bed of a dried-up torrent. From whence could it have come in such a region, which, in the memory of history, has not received two drops of rain? The climate of Egypt, then, has not always been the same. If the stones beneath our feet could but have spoken, they would, no doubt, have told us of events and antiquities, more strange, and more curious, than the mysteries of Isis.

The sun strikes down upon our heads; the refraction on the ground dazzles us; the heat is

insupportable. A few Fellahs who followed us carried water-bottles, with which, from time to time, we refreshed ourselves. Not a blade of grass to be seen, not a bird, not an insect; the swallows of the desert, who are the colour of sand, avoid this valley of the dead; the only living thing that we met with was the horned viper. Upon what does it feed? No one can tell. The road seemed to us very long; yet, notwithstanding this desolation, was wanting neither in grandeur nor in beauty. The solitude kept us tongue-tied; each one advanced without opening his mouth.

At length the head of the column halted, and we dismounted in a sort of amphitheatre, where nothing indicated the vicinity of the tombs. Those poor Pharaohs had used every means in order to hide their last resting-places, and insure peace to their long, last sleep. They have, however, been unburied, and the glory or the shame of this profanation does not belong to us; all the tombs that were discovered were violated, and have been closed up again for many centuries.

An attendant lit some candles, which he distributed to us as if all the company were going to bed. We were about to visit the funereal residence of Seti the First, father of Rhamses the Second. It is better than a house, it is a veritable subterranean palace: vestibule, staircases, galleries, saloons, small apartments—nothing was wanting but the stables; you lost yourself, even with a

lantern, in this sumptuous labyrinth, where painters and sculptors have decorated every corner. An incredible amount of labour lies hidden in these tombs. The despotism of the Pharaohs is visible here in all its enormity: one admires, not without a shudder, the works imposed upon a people who lived in houses of mud. Ancient Egypt has concentrated all her energies in religious edifices; the nation has preserved nothing.

We descended into four or five tombs, the plans of which are various, but the spirit and the execution are everywhere the same. It appeared as if sacred tradition had condemned all artists to copy each other.

Towards one o'clock, Moured-Pacha, who fills the office of Michmandar to the young Princes, announced to them that breakfast was ready. In the vestibule of Rhamses the Fifth we found it laid, not upon a Turkish carpet, but upon two long strips of Persian carpet stretched parallel to the walls. We took our places as best we could. At the last moment it appeared that the servants had forgotten a host of things; plates were scarce, and forks equally wanting; as for glasses, it was lucky to have one for every three persons. There was something peculiar in eating one's breakfast in a tomb; there was no etiquette—everyone did the best they could.

The dessert was given up to the attendants, and never in my life have I seen food so quickly cleared

off. After a distribution of backshish, the Princes mounted their horses in order to pursue the course of the torrent, whilst we followed Mr. Mariette, and climbed the mountain by means of a small path. Large panoramas are scarce in a flat country; you must, therefore, take advantage of them when they appear. From the summit of the Lybian chain we had the most perfect view that the traveller could desire. The yellow Nile in the midst of her verdant valley; beneath our feet the temples of Gournah, Rhamseion, Medinet-Abou, and quite a plot of different ruins; in front of us, Karnac and Luxor; in the horizon the Arabian chain; in a word, all that remains of Thebes, and that imperishable framework of that denuded but ever grand picture.

We rejoined the cavalcade at the foot of the mountain, and galloping back to Luxor, we embarked on board our vessels. Those who were leaving, discharged their guns by way of adieu, those who remained behind answered in the same language, and it was thus that we bade adieu to the city of the hundred porticos.

One circumstance destroyed my pleasure; Ahmed had not rejoined us, and we had had no news from him. The Arabian postal service is very regular in Upper Egypt. A Fellah with naked feet, and with no other baggage than a small valise suspended to the end of a stick, trots lightly along the bank of the river until he meets with a relay, and thus correspondence is carried sufficiently

quick, and without incumbrance, as far as the White Nile. Every town has its post-office; the difficulty is to discover a clerk who knows our language; I do not believe that there is one, except in Cairo. Besides which, all Europeans who go up towards Assouan, have their letters addressed to Mustapha Aga, agent to the English Consul. Mustapha may, no doubt, be able to speak English; but he has never been able to read it. When I paid him a visit, in order to find out some news of Ahmed, he offered me a chibouque and coffee, and requested the servant to bring me the letter-box. They placed before me a box quite open, and filled with newspapers and letters. "There," said he, "that is all I have got; if you find anything that belongs to you, you have only to take it." I lost half an hour in looking—I mistake, for my trouble was rewarded by finding three letters addressed to Mustapha himself, who seemed very much astonished at my discovery.

Neither Ahmed's absence or silence gave me any anxiety. I knew that he was in good company; everything led me to believe that he had been desirous of keeping the feast of the Beiram amongst his own people; perhaps even he had made another step in Miss Grace's affections, and happy lovers have the right sometimes to forget their friends. Certainly he was not in despair, since he would most certainly have written to tell me of his troubles and to ask for my assistance. We were approaching the

village of Erment, where the Viceroy possesses an immense sugar-cane plantation and refinery. I had been told by my friend that this cultivation would turn out a valuable property to the Viceroy; and he had added, with emotion, "Please God, our sovereign (in Arabic, Effendina) one of these days will draw the revenues he has a right to expect! He will be the richest proprietor of the civilized world; he will no longer require to levy taxes, but it will be him who, from his private revenues, will come to the assistance of the Egyptian people." This prophecy required a little explanation. I accordingly put myself into communication with an honest Frenchman of the name of Guérin, and in less than an hour he gave me all the information I required.

Upper Egypt, well cultivated, might easily become a perfect mine of sugar. A hectare of moderately good ground produces 90,000 kil. of cane, which give 3,600 kil. of sugar, and 1,000, or thereabouts, of molasses. There are few colonies where the planters obtain such good results; in the Antilles, at Réunion, and in the Mauritius, the soil is exhausted; and it is only by the aid of guano that a moderate harvest is still reaped.

All Egyptians have a right to grow sugar, to press it, to boil the juice, and even to refine it if they choose; but industrial labour is so scarce and so dear that none but a man like the Viceroy is able to take advantage of it. The Prince Halim and Mustapha-Pacha, who used formerly to work sugar

refineries, are almost totally ruined; Ali-Pacha and Ahmed prefer agriculture to manufacture, and it is thus that the manufacture of sugar has, so to say, become monopolised by the sovereign. The manufactory at Erment is supplied not only from the viceregal domain which surrounds it, but also by various small proprietors in the neighbourhood, who cultivate the cane to sell. The machinery is perfect; the mischief is that the coal costs about a hundred francs per ton, or ten times dearer than in Manchester.

The Egyptians, out of every ten canes that are harvested, send nine to the mill, and keep the tenth to replace in the ground. It is laid down its full length, and out of each knot shoots a bunch of sprouts. This method is doubly injurious: it is absurd to bury every year the tenth part of the harvest, when it could be better employed; and it is, to say the least of it useless to force the inferior portion, or the white end of the cane, which gives an insipid and scarcely sugary juice. With an economy of ten in a hundred which I would point out, an important reduction in the expense of labour and fuel would be made; not only more juice, but a richer juice, and a less costly evaporation would be obtained. The inhabitants plant too hard; the air cannot circulate between the stalks, the plant is unable to breathe, the lower leaves die away, and the cane grows without any body.

Assouan is a town not entirely built of mud;

here and there you meet with houses made of bricks in an elegant style enough, and amongst others a shop, the exact copy of which astonished Paris at the Exhibition of 1867. The bazaar is animated, the faubourg of the Almées is picturesque; at every step one meets the produce of Soudan; you see pottery, jewels, and arms of every description upon the stalls. I met an elephant in the streets who seemed quite at home; I remarked some horses from Dongalah, a beautiful and strong breed, much taller than the Arab. Tropical heat is felt here; we were absolutely cooked in the sun of the 28th of January, whilst in Paris the Seine was frozen. All the children run about naked; whilst the girls, up to the eve of their marriage, wear nothing but cotton trowsers fantastically ornamented with shells. The race is handsome, although black; I regret to say, however, that the fair sex use castor oil instead of pomatum. The island of Elephantes, covered with those monuments of which nothing but the *débris* remains, is covered with magnificent date-trees, which shade the barley and bean fields. The country assumes a lively aspect; the town is built like an amphitheatre, whilst the Nile is banked with black rocks rising out of the yellow sand. The novelty of everything made us forget our fatigue; we had but one idea—it was to go further. Arakel declared that his dream had ever been to possess a farm between Assouan and Ouâdi-Halfa, that is to say, between the first and second cataracts. The

name of Ouâdi-Halfa caused us some emotion; the colossus of Ipsamboul attracted us; we knew that the Viceroy, with great expense, had transported a steamer to the other side of the first fall; we were quite certain that the Princes would not refuse us the use of it if it were at liberty; but how to get information in a country where everything is affirmed, but nothing is known for certain? We took counsel on board the "Chibine." I made inquiries of all the men who could give me any information—of the Moudir of Keneh, of the sous-préfet of I don't know what place, of Mr. Mariette's reïs, of our own, and of ten or a dozen other persons. "Shall we get the steamer?"—"Yes." "No." "Is it at liberty?"—"It is gone." "It is gone, but it will return to-morrow." "What do you mean?"—"The machinery is out of order." "Suppose we were to use the telegraph, the matter could be decided directly."—"Bah! the other evening, at Mr. Mariette's, we endeavoured amongst us to decipher a dispatch containing twenty words, but we were none of us able to do it."

The discussion was, however, soon brought to a termination by the ever kind and thoughtful Mehemet Pacha. He informed us that the steamer was in use; there was, therefore, no longer any hopes of getting further.

On the outskirts of Assouan is the island of Philæ, one of the greatest wonders of the world. The joint effort of art and nature has, perhaps,

never produced anything so beautiful. On the 28th of January, at twelve o'clock, the Princes invited us to breakfast upon the terrace of the grand temple of Philæ, and they so arranged it that this party of pleasure was, as it were, the bouquet of the whole voyage.

CHAPTER XVII.

Early the next morning, at about seven o'clock, some upon horses, others upon asses, we put ourselves *en route;* Arakel, in the small boat belonging to the vessel, intended to ascend the Nile by means of the side canals, and to return over the cataract. Mehemet Pacha and his younger brother Hassan, galloped on in advance; the Prince Hussein being rather unwell, had remained on board. Mr. Mariette, his eldest son, my two friends and I, trotted along the dusty road upon a beautiful morning, stopping now and then to read a Greek inscription, or to gaze upon the remains of a Roman wall that used formerly to unite Syene to Philæ. Two Bicharis, mounted upon two white dromedaries, passed and repassed us at a gallop, making their mounts grimace and growl.

At first we could hardly understand why these two nomads showed off these manœuvres, and testified their friendship by a thousand salutes

and demonstrations. It was the Prince Mehemet who had ordered them to follow us, and to lend us their dromedaries in case of accident; but none of us felt inclined to ascend these moving mountains. The ship of the desert rolls also.

After a journey of an hour and a half, we came upon the most coloured, the most brilliant, and the most savage of bivouacs. Close to an abandoned convent, upon a sandy ridge, a hundred dromedaries were reposing in the sun; each one carried the sword and buckler of his master. The nomads, spread in picturesque disorder round about, slept, smoked, or were taking coffee. In front of us the island of Philæ, covered with ruins, with palm trees and mimosas, rose in the midst of the little lake without a ripple on its surface.

We halted just in front of that pretty little kiosk-like temple which had been destroyed before having been finished, but perhaps none the less picturesque on this account. Soon a great hubbub announced the arrival of the Princes. They took us on board a superb and richly decorated dahabieh, which twenty oars made fly over the water. An animated but eccentric pantomime, to say the least of it, in the shape of dancing, singing, and jumping, immediately commenced. The water was crowded with all sorts of little craft, little rascals sitting astride logs of wood paddled about and around the vice-regal galley, begging for backshish. Here, then, was a nautical programme, but little varied, I dare

swear, since the days of Cleopatra. We made the tour of the island without hurrying ourselves, avariciously enjoying a sight the most unique in the world, and one that we should never see again. It has been said that Comte Branicki offered two millions for this desert island, and that the Viceroy refused them. He did well; but to level the earth, to sweep away the ruins of the village, and to water the trees, has yet to be done. A few millions of francs laid out upon this delicious corner of the globe would make it an unrivalled paradise. This project was at the time I speak of under consideration, and as Ismail Pacha's resolutions are soon taken, I conclude the matter is already carried out.

The great temple of Philæ is very beautiful, above all very curious with its painted columns; but —dare I own it?—that which interested us most was the inscription engraved to the memory of the French expedition.

English tourists had dishonoured it by a thousand injurious commentaries; they had desecrated the name of Bonaparte. An honest Frenchman passing by effaced this coarseness, and wrote this simple inscription for the public: "*A page of history should never be desecrated.*" The lesson was a profitable one; the page has remained intact; the name of General Bonaparte has for the last four or five years been replaced by Prince Napoleon.

The spectacle had so absorbed our attention that we forgot the hour, and our appetites had almost

forgotten that it was mid-day, when the *maître d'hôtel* came to announce in good French that their highnesses were served. We climbed up a ruined staircase to a terrace over which an awning had been spread, and where I perceived a magnificent table, spread with every luxury, awaited us. There were eight of us; the Prince Imperial, his brother Hassan Pacha, Mourad Pacha, Mariette Bey, the Commandant Haillot, my two friends, and myself; at another table sat the suite. After washing, they gave us a plentiful repast. We had just finished a *tart aux confitures*, and thought we had come to the dessert, when an enormous roast turkey appeared. Mehemet Pacha tore off the wing and placed it on the plate that was before me. I could not exactly understand this, but he good-naturedly explained to me that it was a mark of friendship consecrated to the usages of the country, and that the host literally gave to eat to those of his guests whom he wished to honour. Dinner over, the inevitable coffee and chibouques followed. We settled ourselves as comfortably as we could upon the carpets and cushions, the better to admire the beauties that surrounded us. It was a dream! but perhaps we had imperceptibly dreamed since we fell asleep. I see again, as it were through a mist, that poor Moudir, belated, out of breath, swallowing his breakfast, and emptying the few plates we had left untouched. The heat was intolerable; Parisians who wish to form an idea of it should clothe them-

selves in flannel under a July sun. Mr. Mariette disturbed us too soon; he wished to conduct us I don't know where, in order to show us some more ruins on a neighbouring islet; but a calm reflection decided that it would be more prudent and more agreeable to take another walk round Philæ.

At this moment Arakel appeared, more hungry than the Moudir, and exhausted with fatigue. He had journeyed upon the Nile with Eliacin, since the morning. He had endured eight hours during the burden of the day in the Chibine's boat; but he would neither take rest nor nourishment, so anxious was he to shoot the great cataract in our company. Mr. Mariette strongly dissuaded me against the adventure; Najac and Dulocle were persuaded, and the bark, loaded with four passengers and eight oarsmen, floated out into the stream, whilst we started for the cataract on land. I have since learnt that the hardy navigators had seen death very close to them, but nothing else more singular or instructive. As far as we were concerned, we saw them dancing about in that miserable boat between a rock that threatened to dash them to pieces and a whirlpool anxious to engulph them, and five minutes after their passage the real spectacle began. A horde of Nubians, young, vigorous, and beautiful as the night, launched themselves into the frothing water, and sported about for ten minutes, like so many trout in a boiling stream, after which they came and demanded backshish from the princes.

There might have been two hundred negroes, who formed a long black band across the snowy foam ; an ink bottle upset into a pan of milk ! When they came up out of the river, clambering up the granite rocks on the banks with their hands and feet, it seemed as if two hundred Ajaxes in black marble were saying, " We escape, notwithstanding the crocodiles ! "

We retook the road to Assouan across the stony sand of the desert. No sooner did the Bicharis find themselves in the open plain, than they gave us a tilting match with dromedaries, so animated, so brilliant, and so varied, that nothing could have been better as a termination to the fête.

The next morning's waking was a melancholy one ; it was necessary to depart, to descend the Nile, and to return northwards. We took away with us an ample provision of souvenirs, to say nothing of a *coup de soleil*, dating from Assouan, which had reddened me like a lobster; but we were more astonished than satiated, and to make use of a vulgar expression, *nous restions sur notre appétit.* It was useless repeating to ourselves that each turn of the wheels brought us nearer to our families—that it would be soon time to go home—that a journey is at the bottom but an instructive exile : there was something wanting ; in fact, we were not content to turn our backs upon the tropics. The wind itself seemed to sympathise with our regrets —it was dead ahead—and I profited by the time

thus given me to write out our consultations upon agriculture and social economy, which had been the principal object of my voyage.

Thanks to the materials furnished by Ahmed, this was not a difficult matter; besides which, there was nothing to distract me, although the Nile is like a little town where all Europeans know each other, invite each other, and amuse themselves together. You breakfast with one, you dine with another, you go on board your vessel with ten persons to take tea out of five cups. Every object of interest which you pass upon the road becomes an excuse for a party; one organises picnics, for which the liberality of the Viceroy supplies everything. Najac was almost sure to pass a charming evening with some English or Americans, who became his intimate friends, and brewed miraculous punch, but somehow or another he forgot their names, and he is afraid he forgot to give them his.

At Luxor I again saw Ahmed's vessel, always under the British flag. It was on the 31st of January, towards one o'clock, when we arrived; the day was cold, the sky was clouded, and the Nile was rough. A few guns, fired off upon principle, did not awake the slightest echo. Not a face appeared at the windows of the floating saloon in which the English people passed their time. Our friend's Reïs, who was smoking his pipe in the fore-part of the vessel, recognised and made signs to us, but no one appeared. We began to fear that some accident

had happened; and I was preparing to pay them a visit, when Ahmed appeared upon the bank. He had perceived our approach from the village, and he hastened to shake me by the hand.

His features seemed to me to be altered, either from cold or from some uneasiness of mind. He was served with a chibouque and some coffee, which he just touched with his lips, whilst answering our questions with a constrained air. Miss Grace was unwell, it appeared, and the Longmans were horribly tired. They had made some interesting excursions round Keneh; they had visited and sketched the temples of Denderah and Abydos; they had shot wild geese, killed a pelican, missed a crocodile, and ridden in the desert up to a certain point on the road to Kosseïr; after which they had gone as far as Thebes in one day, but there the English people begged to be excused, they could do no more; they wished to go down the river and rejoin their yacht, which, to them, was their home. They had all halted for the last eight-and-forty hours before Luxor; even Miss Thornton herself was anxious to return. How could one return under sail with the wind ahead? The Nile is rapid, but the dahabiehs are vessels high out of the water, with but little draught; they offer more surface to the resistance of the wind than the current. How else were they to get on? There were no roads, and if there were, there are no carriages in Upper Egypt.

It appeared that Ahmed's voyage had turned out

badly; his soul was unhappy; we had no comfort to give him, and delicacy forbade us to embark five more people on board the Viceroy's vessel. I dragged the poor fellow into my cabin upon the pretext of showing him my purchases. As soon as we were alone, I said to him,

"Well! how goes on your love affair?"

He burst out crying like a child.

"Does she not love you?"

"Her heart is mine; and it is even but three days ago (these Englishwomen are incomprehensible!) she declared to me, in the presence of her friends, that she would wed no other man but me .... Only she would never marry me, she said; our climate, our manners, and our laws frighten her; she would not expatriate herself without the hope of returning; she would die here .... What more shall I tell you? If I was man enough to realise my fortune, and follow her to England, one might see! At any rate she understands that I am useful in Egypt; she does me even the honour to believe that I am indispensable. Mrs. Longman appeared to agree with her; the young Englishman seemed undecided, and, above all things, visibly enraged; but the old maid who came over with you was angry with her, told her she was foolish and prudish, and declared that for her part she would have never refused so eligible a *parti* if she had met with him at twenty years of age. Miss Grace bravely defended herself; 'No,' said she, 'I am not a prude, since I

love Ahmed; and I dare to own it before you all. My heart will always be his; I shall leave it in Egypt, and I shall take away from here nothing but a poor being in despair! If it pleases me to suffer thus, no one has a right to blame me. Ahmed, I give you my soul; it is the best part of me; do not ask more; God knows my resolution is irrevocable.' . . . . After uttering these words she rose from the divan, took my head between her hands and pressed her lips to mine. I was mad; my head felt on fire, and a choking sensation in my throat prevented my answering. We have all been ill since that time, and I know not what to think. It seems to me, nevertheless, that a kiss binds two souls for a lifetime." . . . .

"In Egypt, perhaps; but in France, that depends. It is certain that in Paris we never perpetrate such things without something arising out of the affair. English people see it in another light, because, no doubt, they have a different way of feeling, and that which has almost turned your brain, is with them but a common caress."

The arrival of Mr. Longman precluded any further conversation. The young Englishman appeared to me fatigued and preoccupied. He appeared like a man who is tired of antiquities, whose system is out of order, and who regrets having strayed into a country where there is no commerce and no industry. He did not expect to find me with Ahmed; perhaps he anticipated going back with

us to Cairo. Discretion, however, prevented his proposing an arrangement which I satisfied him would be impossible, by showing him our accommodation. In the midst of his visit the Prince's vessel hoisted the signal for departure. I was at liberty to remain behind, but I took care not to tell him so. We parted without any explanation and sending my respectful homage to the three English ladies, I bade him adieu and started for Abydos.

The remainder of the voyage was but a party of pleasure varied with occasional hard work. Abydos detained us for one day amongst a numerous and charming society. The Moudir, a brave Copt, received us with all sorts of festivities. I took away from his house a collection of images painted in a convent of Siout, and superior in simplicity to the ancient products of Épinal. You see on them Noah smoking his chibouque upon a steamer, and some other drolleries of the same sort. The authors of *La Belle Hélène* have never invented more preposterous travesties.

The study of the tomb of Beni-Hassan detained us some hours. It is there that one sees and envies the rural felicity of the Egyptians before the time of Abraham: no trace of religion, no index of servility, but a hundred pictures of the chase, fishing, drinking, and selling. Dancing, music, and gymnastics, are the favourite amusements of a free people. And those tombs, in which

the happiness of Egypt seems to have been buried for many years, repose upon Doric columns!

Memphis took us two days, and I do not regret it. At the foot of the Lybian chain, close to the pyramids of Sakkarah, the ancestors of the great pyramids and all the monuments of Egypt, Mr. Mariette introduced us into the mud house that had been the witness of all his labours, of his discouragements, and of his grand victory. One morning, whilst they were preparing breakfast under a more than rustic verandah, he led us across an arid plain, where the goats even seemed to have no other sustenance than the débris of mummies, to Serapium. We followed a declivity, which finished at the entrance to a cavern in which a hundred and fifty living statues, candle in hand, showed us the funereal galleries, where slept in other days the Apis. In a sarcophagus, a table was prepared, with eight chairs around it, into which we descended and drank rhaki, to the health, the glory, and the immortality of our guide and host.

The next day we re-entered Cairo; but not exactly as we had left it. The Hôtel d'Orient appeared to us clean and comfortable, I can't say why, except perhaps it was that we had been there before, and that the instinctive desire for home, good or bad, definitive or provisionary, commands you to love the spot you have known before. Our curiosity was no longer active; we were aware that we had still much to see; we had decided con-

scientiously, and to the end, to carry out the *métier* of travellers; and, notwithstanding the influence of the climate, we quietly waited for sights to come to us, like tourists on the Nile gaze upon a temple or mountain whilst swiftly passing by. We loved to live without keeping account of the flight of time; we rose no longer at daylight; we went more often in a carriage than on foot; we inconvenienced ourselves but for things really worth seeing; we passed whole days in the museum of Boulaq; we whiled away six hours together in the bazaars, seated upon a carpet before some shop, chibouque in hand, the eye dreamily amused with the coming and going of the crowd; little by little we began to get naturalised.

A letter from Monsieur Voisin awoke us from the dream. The chief engineer of the Isthmus renewed his invitation, and recalled to us our promises. I shook off my torpor; I was ashamed of myself—I was ashamed of the precious time I had lost; but when I wished to reckon the time, I perceived that our return to Cairo dated scarcely eight days back.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Upon a certain morning in February, I left with Najac for Ismailia, which is the heart of the Isthmus. Dulocle bade us adieu; he was awaiting the next boat for France. Arakel was compelled

to return to his duties; Mr. Mariette plunged once more into his labours, whilst from Ahmed and the English people there had been no intelligence whatever since Luxor.

A young official belonging to the Company met us at the station, and never quitted us until we reached the port of Ismailia. The Delta railway stops at Zagazig, and it was necessary to perform the rest of our journey upon a canal, in a boat drawn by mules. The crossing was dreadfully monotonous, notwithstanding that M. Voisin had supplied us with a sumptuous boat, with every convenience. One had even the desire to land, and, if it were but for one hour, to run across fields or verdure of some sort. So monotonous was it, that each relay represented an event, where one amused oneself by admiring the efforts of the postillion to make a refractory mule move on. At the village of Tell-el-Kèbir, we got out at the telegraphic station, and were received by a young Frenchman of good family. By what unfortunate mischance had this titled individual found himself there? How many others of the same sort have found work in that Isthmus? It is hard to know the numbers of sons of noble families who have come to reform in this desolate country. We were traversing the Land of Goschen, where Jacob and the Jews were encamped in the times of the Book of Genesis; it was then, according to the Bible, the most fertile country in Egypt. That valley, or that oasis, "*Ouâdy*," had

been given to the Isthmus Company by Saïd Pacha; M. Lesseps placed it under the control of a self-taught agriculturist, a man fond of sport, one who revealed upon his first entry an aptitude and a great wish to be useful. In the hands of M. Guichard, Ouâdy brought in six hundred thousand francs rent before it was given back to the Egyptian Government.

Night fell before the end of the journey; our guide was an amusing fellow; he kept us awake with all sorts of stories and legends about Ismailia; we fancied ourselves listening to the chronicles of a French *sous préfet*. At length we all three fell asleep. A slight shock awoke us from our dreams; two strong arms dragged us towards a small landing-place; astonished and staggering, we crossed a sandy path between a row of elegant houses, and a mirror-like lake that glittered beneath the moon. A few steps farther on we arrived at an open wicket; we crossed a beautiful garden; we ascended a few steps; an amiable-looking man in a black coat and white neckcloth welcomed us, and handed us over to his people to show us our rooms. I thought I must be dreaming; why this black coat in the midst of the desert? My astonishment was turning into madness, when, on listening, I heard the smothered sounds of a symphony played by an orchestra. Had they taken advantage of my slumbers to take me back to Paris?

As I gave myself up to these reflections, whilst

crossing a gallery that surrounded a court planted with trees, one dog, then two or three dogs passed me, running close beside us; a fourth stopped and pushed his muzzle into my hand. I wanted to stroke his head; I pricked myself. Gracious, he had horns! These dogs were tame gazelles, pets belonging to Mademoiselle Voisin. A well-dressed servant introduced me into a large chamber of quite Parisian luxury. I washed myself mechanically, still half asleep with fatigue and surprise. White neckcloths and gazelles! M. Voisin did not give us time to dress ourselves, but dragged us off just as we were; he led us to the door of a charming *salon* magnificently lighted up. The symphony had left off; they were dancing; the dresses were those such as are worn in summer in the châteaux of our country. I recognised several faces. Here I saw M. de Saux, minister plenipotentiary for the time being, and his charming wife, who is a celebrated painter under the name of Henriette Browne. Here, too, is the son of M. Emile Perrin, of the Opera, and the brother of George Pouchet; but that brown face, half hidden in a glass of orangeade, is it not Mr. Longman's? I recognise, on his right, the old maid; on his left, the young pale-looking lady. And Miss Grace? Is it she who is waltzing in a tarlatane dress with cherry-coloured ribbons? And her partner? God forgive me my sins! It is the living portrait of Ahmed, in a black coat and pearl-grey trowsers. I

rubbed my eyes, I pinched my arm; there was no doubt! I was quite awake; that great brown fellow that the waltz intoxicates, as at Brunoy, is our Fellah in person. After this extraordinary and unexpected meeting nothing would have astonished me. If they brought me the patriarch Jacob in a white neckcloth, and dancing with a gazelle, I should not have exhibited the least surprise.

Mr. Longman rushed up to me and explained his presence. They profited by a favourable wind to get down to Minieh; they only stopped at Cairo a sufficient time to get their luggage, and went on the same day to the town of Suez. The "Butterfly" had been ordered to Port Saïd, and her master was going to rejoin her by way of a canal. He was quite proud to inform me how he had met the Duke of St. Albans and his beautiful Duchess in the basin of the dockyard where their yacht was refitting.

"The time has gone by," said he, "for misinformed English patriotism to sneer at the Suez Company and its works. The conduct of Sir Henry Bulwer, who visited the works like a sphinx, without opening his mouth, would appear to-day more ridiculous than diplomatic. I shall write to the editor of the 'Times' to say that the Isthmus has been cut through without me; that the completion of the works is no longer a question of money, and that in this vast enterprise, conducted with patience and courage, the greatest expense has been sus-

tained by Egypt, the greatest glory belongs to France, whilst the greatest profit will accrue to England. Are you aware that our Abyssinian expedition would be impossible, were it not for the irrigating canal which carries the Nile to Suez? What means of provisioning our transports of war, each of which carries a regiment, should we have, if it was necessary to fetch water in waggons twenty miles off? India belongs to us now more than ever, since the distance which separated the metropolis from her possessions is abridged. Our commerce with the East will be doubled if we haste to alter our Marine by constructing a different kind of vessel. Do you know Mons. Lesseps?"

"Slightly."

"Pray tell him from me that his name is a page of history. He did not invent the idea, which is as old as the world, but he invented the success. The glory of the execution will be infinitely enhanced by the magnitude of the obstacles that beset its execution. To vanquish the indifference of these, the scepticism of those, the avarice of the one, and the bad wishes of the other, is a far greater triumph than to kill a hundred thousand poor devils in battle array. Mons. de Lesseps has re-established intellectual men in the eyes of practical men, which was by no means easy to accomplish."

"The eulogy is a just one, and I promise to transmit it to the right quarter."

"You will, I am sure, add your congratulations to

mine when you have seen it. When I first arrived, I confess that I was sceptical; the humbugs of Alexandria, and the fierce prejudices of Ahmed, had predisposed me against the splendid things and the good people that I have seen here; I consider myself fortunate to have seen the place before the work was finished. When large ships will have crossed in six hours, the thing will appear simple; and we shall ask ourselves the question if it has not always been so, and if this forty leagues of water which joins the two seas, is not a freak of nature. When you go there you will see machines as large as cathedrals, working with the precision of a Greenwich clock. I saw one that did the work of three hundred men, employing only fifteen; it was lifting 80,000 cubic metres of débris per week. The undertakers of this work are men who compose the élite of your Polytechnic School, the comrades and the equals of your chief engineers. I place in the same category, and perhaps even a little higher, those youthful engineers who came straight here from their schools without resources, and who, when the work is finished, will go away poor and unknown, to take rank after their more fortunate comrades."

Mr. Longman's enthusiasm touched me to the heart, but he prevented my paying my compliments to those around. I gently disengaged myself, in order to make the acquaintance of several new faces. Mons. Voisin presented us to the accomplished

mistress of the house; she was his daughter, and, if I recollect right, was but thirteen years of age; afterwards to Mdme. and Mlle. Guichard—two people of great distinction, and also to Mons. Guichard. In a short time we had accomplished the round of the *salon*, and were more than ever persuaded that the canal had brought us back to France. When we arrived in front of Miss Grace, Ahmed, who was talking to her, at once retired, as if from discretion, but in reality because he did not exactly know what sort of face to put upon the matter. He had spoken to me with horror of the Isthmus, and I had found him dancing upon the bones of his father. He was evidently troubled whenever our looks met; and I amused myself to the end of the evening by paralysing him with either a gesture or a look whenever I saw him paying his addresses,—in order to avenge country, family, and friendship, that is to say Egypt, old Ibrahim, and myself.

When the company dispersed, I joined myself to the party who escorted the English people to their hotel; and, having bid them good night, I seized upon Ahmed, and dragged him down to the borders of the lake.

"On the day that I landed in Egypt you kept me up all night. It is my turn now! I shall not let you go until you explain to me why you quitted Cairo so unceremoniously, why you have treated me so coldly for the last five hours, and how it is that I find you paying a visit to these

farceurs of the Isthmus, of whom you spoke so badly. You are, then, no longer a patriot, my dear Ahmed?"

He pricked up his ears like a horse who hears the crack of the whip. "If every Frenchman," answered he, "loved his country as much as I do mine, France would get on better. You don't comprehend why I am here? I am at home. The soil belongs to his Highness. The capital that they are spending here for the last ten years, more than half has been found by the Viceroy. I come here as a simple citizen. Will you contest with me the right I have to overlook the use to which the money, of which I myself have furnished a portion, is put to? Why should I not make these enormous machines my study? Here, too, is lake Timsah, that our ancestors filled with fresh water in order to produce crocodiles; the Company are about to let in salt water—why should we not cultivate sea fish and oysters? The other lakes too in the neighbourhood will soon be in the same position. This is the project of a young Frenchman whom you saw this evening; the idea is a good one, but I fear Monsieur Ritt exaggerates the profits, whilst the expense will be great. Shall we keep this immense lagoon simply as a fishery? I desire no better, provided that the débris of the fish is converted into manure for the improvement of the land. When we possess large sheets of water between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, we shall have rain upon the neighbouring deserts: salt water attracts

fresh water, and fresh water gives cultivation. We will plant the Isthmus like a forest."

"Decidedly your heart is set upon forests."

"I am proud of it. In all countries they create vegetable matter. In Egypt they will, you know, possess another advantage."

"Yes, you will no longer burn your manure heaps to cook soup; and the cosmopolitan population which is commencing to increase here will like it better."

"Do not imagine for one moment that strangers will remain here. They will make their fortunes, and then leave; but they will never multiply until we can create another climate. Egypt is good for Egyptians; it is God himself who has given it to us."

"So it is not only as the friend of progress, but also as an inhabitant, that you approve of cutting the Isthmus?"

"Yes; and in four years my brothers will be of the same opinion."

"You speak of your brothers, Ahmed—what would your father say?"

"It is not the Isthmus that killed poor Ibrahim, it was the statute labour, which now no longer exists."

"Nevertheless, you object to this corner of the country."

"Passion renders men blind."

"To that extent that another passion opens his

eyes. You left me in the lurch because Miss Grace made you a sign, and you followed her."

"She made no sign. Oh, you ungrateful man! They all left me at Cairo, like that large basket of water bottles they left behind expressly at 'Shepherd's,' because it was useless. I followed them, but lost all trace."

"Then she no longer loves you?"

"Yes, she does! for when I found her, her eyes were red, and she almost fainted when she saw me."

"Good. And since then?"

"Since then? She has become colder and colder, without ceasing to be compassionate and good. At some moments I am discouraged, and I desire to fly a thousand miles away, in order that she may regret me for the rest of her life. The other day, at Suez, a steamer was starting for China. I went on board to shake hands with the captain, who asked me if I was going with them? In a moment I was struck with the idea. 'Yes,' said I, 'let us go;' but with such a despairing look upon my countenance, that he answered, 'I take people with me who go for business or for pleasure; but I do not take passengers in your frame of mind. Were you to quit Egypt to-day, you would never see it again, my dear Amhed.'"

"It seems to me you get on better now."

"A little; but I will not answer when she is gone."

"Is she really going?"

"Have you not heard that their yacht awaits them at Port Saïd? I have only three days to live."

"Who knows? Women are so changeable!"

"A miracle would be necessary."

"Perform one."

"I give it up. I have spoken, prayed, and cried; she is made of bronze."

"Heat melts bronze, and it is very lucky that it is so for the human race; for without this we should possess no cannons. Take me back to Mons. Voisin's, for I am very sleepy, and it is beginning to rain."

"It often rains here, since they have filled Lake Timsah. What will happen on the day when Lake Amers——?"

"I will hear the rest to-morrow, my dear Ahmed. Good-night. May the sweetest dreams console him who is the lover of the earth, of the rain, of the forests, of agriculture, of pisciculture, and of Miss Thornton, whom God bless!"

"Najac was obliged to sprinkle me with fresh water a quarter of an hour before the breakfast bell; my first words were, 'It is still raining, then?'"

"In floods, my dear fellow; it is a novelty that deserves to be looked at. Get up quickly; French customs must mould themselves to English manners."

"Does Miss Grace breakfast with us?"

"I think not; but they will all form the same party. If they have brought their waterproofs, they will have the opportunity of showing them. Some one knocks."

"Come in."

"It is some Arab; he has not understood you; I will open. See, here are the gazelles!"

The pretty creatures entered my room. They were so graceful, so delicate, so feminine, that I scrupled to dress before them. Nevertheless, ten minutes afterwards we had the courage to eat a piece of one of them, and to find it delicious!

The table was cleared away at the appointed hour. Every man and woman on the Isthmus ignored anything like delay. The minutes were golden; the work must be completed by the 1st of October, 1869. Neither heat, nor cold, nor rain, nor aught else was permitted to interfere with the work to be done. A good example, and one I hope the Egyptians will follow.

Ahmed and the English people were at the rendezvous at the exact time. A steam launch, towing a beautiful dahabieh, awaited us. We were taken about the lake, which is vast and beautiful, where we saw the dredging machines at work. We visited Serapium, where we saw the ruins of a temple consecrated to Osiris Apis, or to Ser Apis.

The rain continued to fall, but what matter? Our promenade continued. We visited a village composed of mud and planks, the homes of the

workmen. No doubt the Greeks, Italians, Dalmatians, and Montenegrins will save something out of the wages they earn; a good workman earning ten francs a day, and spending only three. Every comfort was provided for the sick or wounded; and each hovel had its plot of ground, filled with flowers, fruits, and vegetables. We landed amongst a grove of tamarinds, acacias, and poplar trees; and Ahmed, offering Miss Grace his hand, said, in true Oriental style—

"Every desert would flourish thus, mademoiselle, were you to bless it with a single look."

She answered, sadly, "Would that I could do away with every desolation upon earth; but the endeavour is too hard a task for a poor little thing like me."

There was a large dinner at Mons. Voisin's together with a ball and concert. The next day one of the youngest engineers of the Isthmus invited us to his hut, situated at the entrance to El-Guisir. Our host was unable to invite the ladies, being a bachelor; but seeing that Ahmed was always with us, he begged of him to join the party.

I could have bet a hundred to one that the Fellah would have refused; but he accepted. This was the more difficult to understand, since I was aware that Miss Grace was going out on horseback the next day; and I naturally asked him, how it was possible he could tear himself away from his mistress's side,

when the time of their separation was so near at hand ?

" My father's grave is at Seuil, and I go to see it. You had better start at the appointed hour. I shall leave early in the morning, and be at the rendezvous before you."

We reached our friend's house by means of a basket carriage drawn by four horses, and after having seen all the wonders of the neighbourhood, we returned to breakfast, where I found Ahmed awaiting us. I thought to have seen that his eyes were red ; but his morning's pilgrimage had in no way affected him ; far from it. You read upon his countenance a more settled and firm resolution. I perceived that he had resumed the costume of his country. At breakfast he ate much and said little, and up to dinner time he seemed to be in more than ordinarily good spirits. A minute before the repast, I spoke to him privately in my room ! " You seem very happy," said I.

" Yes, I have spoken with my father's spirit. Do not smile ; we Mussulmans have few superstitions, but those we retain are dear to us. My father's grave is a humble one, but an *Agavé corne d'Ammon* has taken root upon it ; it is the plant that we suspend over the doors of Cheik-Ali to keep away evil spirits. I offered the poor man a repast composed of the meats he loved best, without forgetting the cup of coffee. I cried, I wept, and he answered me."

I was forced to interrupt him. "Is it you, Ahmed, that I am listening to?"

"Myself, my friend, the pupil of European civilization. Paris and London have polished me, varnished me, made a gentleman of me, whatever you please; but, at the bottom, I have remained Fellah, and I glory in it. Well, I have interrogated my father; and he has told me that he had no regrets in dying for the progress of Egypt, and that he rejoiced that his wife and children were in affluent circumstances."

"Did he not pity you for your disappointment in love?"

"He promised me that before the end of the week, alive or dead, I should be happy."

"*Diantre!*"

"What do you say?"

"There is no time to be lost."

"To-day is Wednesday."

"Sublime!"

"You mean to say that I am foolish?"

"It's all the same."

I saw him no more that night; he dined at some one or another's with Mr. Longman.

On Thursday morning two steam launches with two dahabiehs in tow, took us all on board and proceeded to Port Saïd. The road is a straight one. It is that which the large ships will take in three or four months' time. It is a little narrow here, and a little shallow there; but one can openly confess to

it, since it brings not only the waters of the Mediterranean into Lake Timsah, but it carries on its bosom those deeply laden coal-barges as far as Suez at an enormous expense.

Monsieur Guichard, the ex-farmer of Ouâdy, has however, made such excellent arrangements in the transit department, that the price of coal has fallen from 70 to 50 francs per ton in the Suez market.

On the road, Monsieur Voisin took the pains to explain away all those objections which we had brought with us from France into Egypt. To tell the honest truth, the greater portion of them no longer existed.

"Are you sure," said I, "that the working of the *Rhamsin* will not throw the sand-hills down into the canal?"

"The sand-hills," he answered, "are rare in the desert, they are also compact. They do not move; the strongest wind only sweeps the superficial sand off. We are aware that certain points of the line are menaced. The evil that the *Rhamsin* can effect in a year has consequently been ascertained, and we find it to be three hundred thousand metres of sand to extract, or six hundred thousand francs of expense. It is miserable to think of!"

"But the soft mud of the lakes, which falls back again as soon as it is removed, is destructive to your undertaking every day."

"Just wait until we cross the lakes of Ballak,

or, better still, Menzaleh lake, and you will answer the question for yourselves."

"It is more than probable that steam-ships going at full speed will destroy the embankments by the swell."

"It will be necessary in such places for them to go at half-speed. This is a drawback that I fully anticipated; but, after all, it is better than having to go round the Cape of Good Hope."

We halted to breakfast at the station of El-Kantara, or of the Bridge. An Italian cook treated us so well that Mr. Longman was more than usually flushed. He expressed most hotly his joy at rejoining the "Butterfly." It was not that Egypt bored him, or that he complained of Ahmed. "But I am," said he, "a plain man of business, and excursions like these without any profit do not suit my health. If Miss Grace had consented to the honourable propositions of your friend, I should have been perfectly satisfied. The moment that she refused him she should have turned her back on him. He is very miserable; so is she, so am I. When one undertakes so long a tour, and one so costly, it is to amuse one's self, not to make one's self miserable. Believe me, never accept the position of trustee."

This young gentleman was by no means hasty, but he possessed common sense and clear judgment. I suspected that he had advocated Ahmed's cause

upon certain occasions, for he rendered as much justice to the native as to the European.

The transit across the lakes of Ballak and Menzaleh victoriously contradicted the tradition that the mud banks would, like the rock of Sisyphus, fall back again into the same place after being removed. The canal was finished in the vicinity of Port Saïd; it passed like an arrow across the lake of Menzaleh, with a width of a hundred metres and a depth of eight. We stopped to examine the embankments —they are as firm as a rock; I know of no canal that flows through a basin so strong and so thick. The most striking sight of the whole journey was the Port. In a lagoon of the average depth of a metre, the engineers have scooped out there enormous basins, where the largest merchant ships are safe as in the port of Marseilles. All the principal steam-boat companies of the world send their vessels there at regular dates; there, all the mercantile marine of Europe is represented; no sooner has a dredge completed its work than a ship comes to anchor in the place. Mr. Longman could scarcely believe his eyes—the little "Butterfly" was lost in such a crowd, and it was some time before we found her.

We were received by a young man who is French Consul and superintendent of works in the port; his name is Laroche. It was he who came straight from college with a few workmen to commence the work which he has so well completed. He is a

successful pioneer, clever, literary, and a musician; in ten minutes we were friends. Najac knew him already. Ahmed was struck with him as soon as we. Poor Ahmed! he scarcely knew what to do with himself; the English people had gone on board the "Butterfly," where there was no room for him.

We took up our quarters at the hotel; that is to say, a sort of *châlet*, whose windows look out upon the sea. Everything was comfortable, and everything was clean; the traveller got value for his money; but he who enjoyed the recommendation of Mons. de Lesseps was treated royally. We dined with Laroche, Mons. Borel, or with Mons. Lavalley. The Longmans, who came to see us once or twice, invited us to return their visit; and with the excuse to take tea with them, they nearly drowned us in champagne. The owner of the "Butterfly" spoke continually of his departure; his young wife feared the sea, the old lady was full of feminine sympathy, and Miss Grace said nothing at all. Ahmed had eyes but for her whilst she was amongst us, and for the yacht when she was on board. He would rise at night to assure himself that the little vessel was at her moorings; whilst in the daytime he would gaze upon the sea.

On Saturday, after dinner, MM. Alexandre and Edmond Lavalley proposed a day's shooting upon the lake after breakfast. The English people had been with us the whole morning inspecting the

gigantic workshop in which Mons. Dussaut had prepared the materials for those two indestructible jetties, one 1,900 metres long, and the other 2,500. Mr. Longman, who soon got tired of such things, felt excessively anxious to crown his sixty-guinea gun by the killing of a flamingo to take back to the Yacht Club. But although he killed three dozen wild ducks and widgeons, the flamingoes, who were like pink lines upon the water, fled away five hundred paces from our boat, and not one had the imprudence to seek admission into the Yacht Club.

It was settled that our happy band should separate on the morrow. Mons. and Mme. Saux left for Beyrout with Emile Perrin; Mons. Voison, at six o'clock in the morning, was to conduct us to Suez, through Ismailia, and to show us the excavations of Chalouf. The Longmans, who left for certain at the same hour as we, permitted a last *tête-à-tête* between the lovers. At length we all assembled on the quay; the Longmans thanked their new friends for their kindness, and invited them to pass a few winter months at Wind Castle. It was absolutely necessary to tear Ahmed away from the contemplation of the boat, already indistinguishable in the mist and the darkness.

"Well, my poor friend!" said I, "the week is over."

"Not yet; and Sunday?"

"It is already here."

"It has only just begun."

"What did she say to you to-night?"

"That she still loved me, but would never be my wife. If this Mr. Longman would but remain for another fortnight, I am sure that I should prevail. Just now I felt her heart beating violently against my arm. I would not accept her adieu nor give her mine. 'Reflect once more,' said I; 'you have to say but one word to turn my despair into joy. Little can I hope to sleep this night; I trust that God will inspire you with generous thoughts.' She did not answer 'No.'"

"We shall see what we shall see; at any rate, lay down; it will rest you."

"I would rather die!"

At half-past five on Sunday morning I rushed into his room. There was no one; the unfortunate man had not even laid down. Whilst I was dressing myself he appeared. "I am waiting," he said; "there is some news, although she has not written to me; there is nothing moving on board, and there are no preparations for weighing anchor."

"For an excellent reason; they are moored to a buoy."

"No matter; if they were going to start at six o'clock, we should see some one on deck at a quarter to."

"English sailors are very skilful; they do a great deal, but make little fuss."

At this moment Laroche entered.

"Come on board as quickly as possible! Mons. Voisin is waiting for you."

Ahmed followed mechanically, as if body and soul were separated. I pushed him into the vessel that was waiting to take us. Scarcely had we sat down, than he commenced making excuses to Mons. Voisin.

"I am not going, Mons. le Bey; it is a matter of life and death. Mademoiselle Thornton has deigned . . . Mr. Longman wished . . . You have no doubt guessed my sentiments . . . Thank God, everything looks well. That dear little yacht, that remains so still out there, proves that the young girl . . ."

Before he could finish his sentence, the yacht, loosing her moorings, spread first one sail, then two, then three, until she was covered from her trucks to her decks with snow-white canvas. Ahmed stood like one petrified. The "Butterfly" was passing at two cables' length from us, the ports closed, and her deck deserted. One could scarcely see the man at the helm, surrounded as he was with chickens and fresh meat. I know not whether we ought to confess it, but we were much affected. That little vessel, clean, and polished like the panels of a carriage, seemed to us like an ark of ingratitude. Ahmed, standing up in the fore part of our boat, wept, without speaking. When the "Butterfly" doubled the lighthouse, and was about to enter between the jetties, the Fellah commenced strip-

ping off his clothes, and methodically rolling them round his head. No one interrupted him in this operation: we knew that Orientals often rend their clothes and cover their heads with cinders, as a token of mourning: it is not difficult to understand that under such circumstances they would cover their heads with them. When he was nearly undressed, he turned round to us, and said. "Do not be alarmed on my account; I used to swim in the Nile before my first teeth had fallen. I will either bring back that yacht into port, or else I will go and console myself with my father who is in Heaven." He did not spring into the water, but slid quietly over the side without wetting the enormous turban which surrounded his head. There was scarcely any wind, but the yacht had the start. Mons. Voisin, more affected than any of us, pulled out his watch from habit.

"There he goes, and upsets our programme; but we cannot leave the brave lad . . . Let us follow him, my friends."

Laroche gave the necessary instructions to the steamer, which would easily overtake us.

And there we were, following Ahmed, who in his turn was running after Miss Grace. Our boat was heavily laden, and had but two oars; he swam quicker than we rowed. When we were between the jetties he was already out at sea. There was no indication of fatigue or discouragement about him;

he advanced with mathematical regularity, and approached the "Butterfly." Our boat was unable to go out to sea; we were, therefore, obliged to wait at the east end of the jetty for the steamer, and it was by the aid of my opera glass that I saw the end of the drama.

I saw with my own eyes what I am about to relate, and witnesses, if necessary, are not wanting —there were twelve of us in the boat. The man at the helm either saw or heard some one in the water; he threw him first of something or another which I could not see; after that a hen-coop, which he refused to take; and lastly a rope, which he seized at once. The turban arose to the height of the deck; Ahmed's body, that we could see was black and glistening, was soon covered by a blue spot. The crew came upon deck, no doubt also the passengers; the vessel was hove-to; for eight or ten minutes two human figures, one dressed in blue, the other in white, energetically conversed on the poop; we could distinguish animated, not to say violent gestures. The blue robe bowed, as if to bid farewell, and approached the side of the vessel. The white robe opened its arms, and the two colours seemed blended in one. We saw no more, for at this moment the "Butterfly" went about, and set her head for Port Saïd.

At this moment the steamer hailed us.

"M. Laroche," cried the engineer, "was there any accident?"

"A happy one! at least, one that will, at any rate, last for a few years," answered the young philosopher.

M. Voisin took out his watch. "One hour late, but I don't regret it; we shall soon make it up, for we must reach Ismailia to-night and Suez to-morrow. Put on coal, my children, heap it up!"

THE END.

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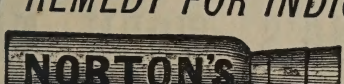
TRADE  MARK.

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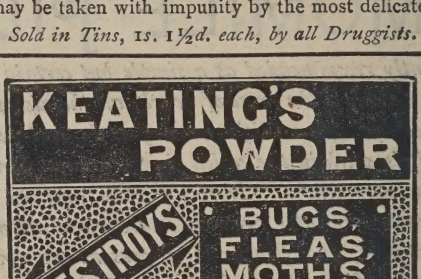

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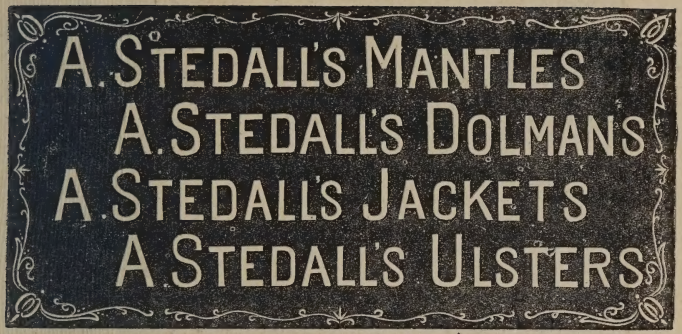

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